

"Tracey Takes On..." Season 2 Episode Guide, Review and Commentary

Part 1: Episodes 1 through 5

Compiled by Roger Reini (roger@rreini.com)

This is a detailed episode guide to, review of, and commentary on episodes 1 through 5 of the award-winning second season of TRACEY TAKES ON ..., the HBO series starring Tracey Ullman. Sprinkled throughout the guide are my commentaries and reviews of the various episodes, sketches and bits.

OTHER EPISODE GUIDES

Episode guides to other seasons can be found at <http://www.rreini.com/tracey/>, as can a concise episode guide for all seasons (no commentary, one-line descriptions of sketches).

Episodes are listed in the order of their original airdate on HBO.

1. Sex (Jan 18 1997)

OPENING SEQUENCE: Last year's opening of Tracey asleep in bed, free- associating words related to each week's topic, has been dropped in favor of a short monologue sequence featuring Tracey *as herself*, similar to what she did in the first two seasons of "The Tracey Ullman Show." This week, she tells us that she's not going to tell us about her sex life (it's more sexy to be alluring and keep the mystery). Her final words on the subject: "Bugger off! I ain't talking about shagging!"

COMMENT: I welcome any development where we get to see more of Tracey as herself. I like her characters very much, but I also like her.

THEME: Last year's theme has also been dropped. In its place, we have her 1984 hit "They Don't Know". This is the original recording; it's not been remade. Accompanying the theme is a sequence with Tracey and several of her characters (specifically, the characters appearing in each week's episode) lip syncing to the song.

COMMENT: I liked last year's theme, even if I couldn't understand all of the words to it. But I also like "They Don't Know". And the lipsync sequence has a nice charm to it. Though it does seem strange to see a character like Chic "singing" along to it ...

SHORT BITS:

Sydney Kross (attorney): Despite being a high-profile and driven attorney, she's still a woman and has her needs. But they haven't been satisfied by the last few men she's had as lovers. She

then proceeds to discuss their "shortcomings." Could being voted the girl you'd least like to have [a certain sex act] done by account for her problems?

COMMENT: Very frank, rather vulgar, but totally hilarious!

Hope Finch (college student): Hope is imagining the course of her sex life (which has yet to start, 'cause she's still a virgin). She'll have her first relationship with a boyfriend who's had some experience, but not too much ...

COMMENT: I'm always glad to see Hope, who's probably one of the most mature college students I've ever seen.

Birdie Godsen (housewife): Sex education belongs in the home, not in school, says Birdie. She tells us about her son, who came home from a camping expedition, where he'd heard various spooky stories about werewolves, monsters and Jews. He said he was going to be a werewolf and have hairy hands and palms. That's ridiculous, she tells him; he'll never grow all of that hair on his hands, unless he touches himself in a certain dirty place. And just to make sure he doesn't, she's been tying the mittens on his sleep suit real tight ...

COMMENT: Right-wingers, look out! Prepare to be skewered! Birdie looks to be an interesting character. We can already tell she's hostile to Jews (boo).

LONGER SKETCHES:

Linda Granger, actress/singer/author/omniphobic (you name it, she either has been, is, or will be addicted to it) is at home, waiting for the cable guy to arrive. Seems her cable is acting up, and she can't get anything higher than channel 50. It just so happens that reruns of "VIP Lounge" (Linda's old series) air on cable 63 every morning (and in Spanish on cable 27 every afternoon). The cable guy arrives. Turns out he's been a fan of Linda's for many years. In fact, he used to have a poster of her on his wall back in the 70's, until somebody stole it. Would you like an autographed replacement, asks Linda. Sure, he says. But it's on a high shelf, so Linda asks him to reach for it. As he does, she sniffs him, savoring his manly odor. She's turned on, and she wants him bad. But she must resist, for (among other things) she's a recovering sexaholic. The temptations build and get stronger. She's weakening, and he's willing. But she regains control. However, it's not for long, for as soon as he turns around, she jumps him from behind, and they start to make wild, passionate love. Now it's afternoon. We know that, because the Spanish broadcast of "VIP Lounge" is on. He's got to leave. As he does, Linda invites the gardeners inside - and bring the leaf blower.

COMMENT: This was hilarious. Is there anything that Linda Granger hasn't been addicted to? Her struggles to resist temptation had me nearly ROFL (rolling on the floor, laughing). A thought: I wouldn't mind seeing Tracey appear as Linda on "Larry Sanders" in the future. Consider the crossover possibilities ...

Fern Rosenthal and best friend Jobie (Julie Kavner) are having lunch. Fern is rather sleepy; she had very little sleep last night. Seems that Harry was feeling rather frisky. Fern was not: "What do I need with THAT anymore?" But Jobie was very happy with her late husband. She envies Fern, who can still get some.

SHORT BITS:

Hope, part 2: In the summer before grad school, she'll meet a man who doesn't have a job, so they can make love all day and all night. She thinks she'll become addicted to his penis. Meanwhile, in the background, there is a couple who is engaged in the act of love.

Kay Clark (caregiver): S-E-X? Never had it, thanks to the continued warnings from Mother. But she might be willing to give it a try sometime, with the right man, of course. Might it be anything like a visit to the gynecologist? She'll still take the tranquilizers ...

COMMENT: Still the same ol' Kay, emotionally scarred for life by Mother.

LONGER SKETCH:

Makeup artist Ruby Romaine arrives on the set, where she meets a crew member (Bruce Kirby) who's an old friend of hers. This movie set is not what Ruby's used to. In fact, it's a set for a porn film. But it doesn't faze her that much; she's seen a lot in her years. She discusses nipple arousal techniques with leading man Geraldo. It's time for Geraldo's big scene, where he (and his "wood") are put in the stocks. But when the time comes, Geraldo's physically unable to perform. The production is "waiting for wood." The director calls for a "fluffer" to help Geraldo out ("we called them starlets in the old days," says Ruby). She can't help. The assistant director (a guy) looks like he's going to try, but the director tells him to bring the dog from the car. Then Ruby offers to help out ("I'll wait for the dog," says Geraldo). Later, everything is fine; they have wood. The scene goes off without a hitch. What did Ruby do? Apply a special mixture of beeswax, hairspray, and a secret ingredient. But Geraldo has a question: when will it go down?

COMMENT: Nothing seems to faze Ruby; she's seen it all. As she put it, she was working in the industry when Noah was still a sailor. Ruby has grown on me; at first I didn't like her because of her bigoted opinions and her coarseness. But underneath all of that, there is still some essential goodness, something that is still likable. That seems to be a common thread running throughout all of Tracey's characters: if you look hard enough, you can find something to like in just about anybody.

SHORT BIT:

Hope, part 3: She's going to get a job in journalism, and she's going to have an affair with her mentor, where they'll have "Tarantino-ish sex". Then she'll get married, and the sex'll be great, then it'll subside for a bit but return to greatness on vacations.

LONGER SKETCH:

Chic is pumping gas, which he compares to sex. This reminds him of the day he became a man. We flash back to the old country, where Chic's father has procured the services of a casaba woman to make Chic a man. He's wearing the "Technicolor sex coat" of his ancestors, all of whom wore it for their rites of passage. He's a little scared, but his father assures him everything will turn out all right. It's time for number 52 (Chic). The casaba woman is impressed with him; clearly, he's no little man. Soon, we hear the sounds of ecstasy coming from the love shack ("That's my boy," says father). It's over. Chic is now a man. His timid personality is gone, having been replaced by the love-god personality we all know. It turns out that the casaba woman retired soon afterwards; seems she never had such good sex in her life. Chic keeps up the tradition; why, he recently took his nephew to a casaba woman. It's basically the same as in the old days, but

now you can get a video. But there isn't a video long enough for Chic ...

COMMENT: You could title this sketch "Chic and the Amazing Technicolor Sex Coat." This was a pretty good sketch, too. It was very amusing to see the young Chic, before he developed his manly swagger. A wicked thought: what would happen if Chic ever met Kay? Talk about irresistible force meeting immovable object!

CLOSING THEME: The last verse of "They Don't Know", done in similar manner to the opening theme.

COMMENT: In this sequence, we see Ruby at the grocery store pushing a grocery cart. You may recall that the original video for "They Don't Know" had a similar scene. Coincidence or homage?

THE END: It's the end of the day, and everybody says goodbye to Tracey as she's heading home. She turns and tells us all to - "Go Home!"

COMMENT: The return of "Go Home!" - all right!

OVERALL COMMENTS (Jan. 19, 1997): A wonderful start to the new season. Here's hoping that all of the episodes are this good.

2. Fantasy (Jan 25 1997)

OPENING MONOLOGUE: Tracey tells us how, as a girl of 5, she went to see the Beatles in concert at the Hammersmith Odeon in London. She had a great time screaming and "getting feelings about men that no 5-year-old should have." So she fantasized that when she grew up, she and Paul would get in the car and head off into the sunset. But it was just a fantasy ...

COMMENT: ... or was it? Recall the video for "They Don't Know".

SHORT BITS:

Fern and Jobie (Julie Kavner) are lounging by the pool at their condo. Jobie is admiring the new pool man (it's said he swam from Havana). She would like nothing more than for him to spread coconut oil all over her, take her into the cabana and then do several unmentionable things on the table. "On that table with those thin legs?" questions Fern. "It'd never support the weight." This is a fantasy, Jobie (whom Fern said looks like Golda Meir in heat) reminds us. How about taking a swim, feigning distress, and having him give deep, penetrating mouth-to-mouth resuscitation? Nah, she'd have to put on a swimsuit.

COMMENT: This is a good pairing, Fern and Jobie. Come to think of it, anything that allows Tracey and Julie to work together is good. "Golda Meir in heat" - now there's an interesting image <g> ...

Trevor Ayliss (flight steward): His fantasy is to be the steward on the space shuttle. Being weightless with 4 other men - talk about your close encounters!

COMMENT: Now that would be interesting - to be in space surrounded by lovelies of your desired sex. I don't think it's happened yet in real life, but one day, it will.

LONGER SKETCH:

Sydney Kross is reviewing her current case at her firm's partner's meeting. She thinks it's solid, with scads of witnesses and experts, and even someone who can cry on cue, while the other side has just one witness. Unfortunately, that witness is a priest who saw the entire incident. No problem, says Sydney; she'll arrange to have the priest bumped off. The other partners are shocked; she can't be serious about this, they say to each other and to her. But think what winning this case could mean to the firm, responds Sydney: underground parking! She leaves to compose herself, fantasizing about what would happen ...

In her fantasy, Sydney's the one who kills the priest. The police come to arrest her; they have found her hair, her fibers and her footprints at the scene. She's convicted, though we never see the trial (obviously, Clark and Darden didn't prosecute *her* case). As she is led to her cell, it becomes clear that she's a jailhouse celebrity. The other inmates want her autograph, and some want her. What does she want? Her Paul Mitchell shampoo, that's what. She helps the inmates prepare for their court dates. She sees a news story that the DA, who's running for re-election, wants to make her the first woman to die by lethal injection ("he's lost my vote," says Sydney). Later, her mother (Tracey) visits. She wants mother to take the rap for the killing. Mother doesn't want to, but after Sydney vows to reveal where Daddy's buried, she changes her mind. Back to reality and back to the meeting. Sydney's not going to kill anyone, and the partners are greatly relieved. But she could have gotten away with it ...

COMMENT: There were so many jokes and gags, it was hard to keep up with all of them! But that's what you get when you have such a high-powered personality as Sydney. You've heard of type-A personalities? Well, Sydney must be a type-AA! Of course, you could say the same thing about Linda Granger (different AA, though).

SHORT BIT:

Her Royal Highness meets Tracey, the "expatriate mimic." HRH asks Tracey "Can you do me?" Tracey says yes, it's not too hard - one just has to speak as though one has a broom up one's ***. HRH observes that it's an uncanny rendition, especially from one as common as Tracey. They part.

COMMENT: Round 1 - no knockdowns, but I give it to Tracey on points. When will we see round 2?

LONGER SKETCH:

Ruby Romaine is talking to a police detective about a strange incident. Seems she was driving home from the set one night, smoking a cigarette and listening to Lawrence Welk when, all of a sudden, the car started vibrating and shaking strangely, and she was blinded by a bright light. Was this the Big One? No, it was a spacecraft landing in front of her car. Somebody comes out of the craft - it's an alien with green skin, big eyes and LONG fingers, beckoning to Ruby to come with him. They enter the ship, which is decorated in basic aluminum. She has a drink that really knocks her socks off (must have been moonshine). She sees a picture on the wall of what appears to be the head alien. Suddenly, he appears from another room. He is VERY interested in Ruby, and she's intrigued by him (he looks like a cross between Gene Barry and a cucumber). They dance - he gives her a massage - and then they do it. As he's doing it, his butt begins to glow. After the very close encounter ends, he walks Ruby to her car, which has been washed and

waxed while she was inside. Then he returns to his craft and leaves. He really knew how to satisfy a woman. Unfortunately for the police, there's no physical evidence that this actually happened, not even a hickey. Did she just dream it? No, Ruby insists it did happen. The police will work on the case. As she leaves, she has a little nip - and her butt starts to glow ...

COMMENT: This was a great sketch! Is there anything in this universe that would faze Ruby? I got a kick out of the flying saucer resembling an Airstream trailer, her mentioning a fling with Lawrence Welk (irrelevant? Not to Mrs. Welk), the photo of the chief alien (who appears to be giving The Finger - a very long finger). IMHO, this is a good candidate for the "Best Of" compilation at the end of the season.

SHORT BIT:

Mrs. Noh Nang Ning (donut shop operator): Her fantasy is to dance in a big Hollywood musical, like the ones she saw as a child in her home country (and in a town whose name sounds vaguely obscene). She loved the movies and the musicals; they made her forget the beatings back home. She recreates one of those numbers for us by sprinkling some sugar and cinnamon on the floor to get the right sound, opening the fridge for the proper lighting, and then doing a softshoe routine (which is pretty darn good). Of course, in her fantasy, she doesn't have to sweep up afterwards ...

COMMENT: It seemed like the makeup job for Mrs. Noh was simplified a bit this season. Tracey did not appear to be as heavily made up as she was last season.

LONGER SKETCH:

Rayleen Gibson and husband Mitch are on the set of the new James Bond film. The new issue of Penthouse has just arrived, and once again, they fail to make the "Forum" column of sexual fantasies. They talk about some of their previous tries, such as on "Passenger 57", where they did it in an overhead compartment, and on "Apollo 13", where they did it while weightless (but it wasn't as much fun as they'd thought). So now, they're going to do it while hang gliding. They head off for a practice run. Clothes are flung to the wind - the wind is their brother, and friction is their friend.

COMMENT: Now there's a couple with a warm, loving relationship!

CLOSING THEME: Among the bits of this sequence, the incongruity of incongruities - HRH doing a strip tease! And to wrap everything up, we are once again told to "Go Home!" (same sequence as last week).

OVERALL COMMENTS (Jan. 26, 1997): This was another wonderful episode. I especially enjoyed the Sydney and Ruby sketches, though everything was good. I just wish the HRH/Tracey encounter had been longer.

3. Mothers (Feb 02 1997)

OPENING: The scene is London - or Hackbridge, Surrey, to be precise. We are at the home of Tracey's mother, where Tracey and the kids have been visiting. But it's time to leave, so they part. But this parting wasn't such sweet sorrow; mother is glad to get them out of the house ("Thank God they've gone!"), and Tracey's glad to be leaving - apparently, she was just using her mum to humanize herself (a la Letterman).

COMMENT: When I first saw this (after midnight, when I had awakened from a light sleep), this bit struck me as being too mean-spirited and left me with a sour taste. Watching it again (fully awake this time), it didn't seem as bad. There may actually be a grain of truth in this. Sometimes, when you've had guests or have been a guest, you part with mixed feelings - you're sorry to be leaving or to see your guests go, but at the same time, you're a little glad to be getting out of there or having your guests leave, 'cause then things can get back to normal.

SHORT BITS:

Ruby Romaine: She thinks having more than 2 or 3 children means you've got a litter instead of a family, and she cites the neighborhood residents to make her (racist) point. She did things the right way, she thinks; she had two children, Buddy and Desiree. They're not perfect; Buddy has mental problems, and Desiree steals from the morgue, but at least they're not serial killers or people who have sex with their pets. All in all, she thinks she did all right.

COMMENT: Ruby, Ruby, Ruby... She said she had her kids six months apart. Wonder how she managed that?

Mrs. Noh Nang Ning: She's enjoying the Dodgers game with her granddaughter. It seems that being a grandmother is easier than being a mother. She didn't do so well raising her daughter 'cause she was working all the time and put her energy into the donut shop. Now her daughter's married (to a "rich Jew") and living in Silicone Valley (that's "Silicone", not "Silicon"). But she's doing well with her granddaughter, going to all the games. It doesn't hurt that Hideo Nomo is playing for the Dodgers (when's he going to get a sexy calendar?)

COMMENT: This is the first time we hear about anything sexual from Mrs. Noh.

LONGER SKETCH:

Janie Pillsworth is being her usual snotty self at her snotty home with her snotty children Olivia and Daniel. But there is one person in the house who's not snotty: Janie's mother (Tracey), who's moved in with her daughter after the death of her husband. But she's not particularly happy there; she doesn't get out much, and Janie doesn't introduce her to the other parents or to her friends. It's as if Janie is so embarrassed to have such a common, ordinary mother that she tries to keep her out of sight. This is, of course, precisely the case. Janie can't attend the Parents Day picnic tomorrow; Mother offers to go instead, but Janie won't hear of it. Meanwhile, Olivia (Mabel) has crept into the kitchen to sneak a freshly-baked cookie and overhears this conversation. When caught, she reminds Janie that she's going to be old someday. That night, Janie has a nightmare: she's become just like her mother, and now-grown Olivia and Daniel reject her like she rejects her mother. In the dream, she shows up at Olivia's art gallery, but they act as if they've never seen her before in their lives and have her taken away. Janie is deeply disturbed by this and she awakens. Mother's heard the commotion and come to comfort her. She begins to examine herself. She's not been a good mother. But there is hope; she will attend the Parent's Day picnic after all. But is it already too late?

COMMENT: So far, Janie's not been a particularly likable person. Might this be changing? Time will tell. On the other hand, her mother's a decent person. She would be an excellent grandmother.

SHORT BIT:

Birdie Godsen: It's Bobby Jr.'s (her son's) 8th birthday, and he's going to receive for a present his first gun (a 12-gauge shotgun). Turns out that Grandfather is also getting him a gun (a rifle). Problem? No, he can have both of them! But she's not getting him a minibike; those are too dangerous for 8-year-olds...

COMMENT: ... and a semiautomatic rifle isn't? Come on!

LONGER SKETCH:

Ruby Romaine is having difficulty at the grocery store. The clerk (who is Hispanic) won't cash Ruby's check, as her driver's license is expired (but it's a good photo). Ruby is upset, so she hurls some racial insults at the clerk, who goes and gets the manager. Meanwhile, she sees her daughter Desiree (Melinda Dillon) doing her shopping. They haven't seen each other for a while. Turns out that Desiree is minding her granddaughter Whitney - who happens to be half-black. Ruby is upset with this development; what has her granddaughter Karen (Whitney's mother) done with herself? Was she raped? No, she's gotten married, that's what; Ruby was invited to the wedding but didn't show (seems that her son Buddy had a flashback to `Nam on the way to the wedding). Desiree has to go adjust her contacts, so she leaves Whitney with Ruby for a few minutes. At first, she wants nothing to do with the child, but when she sees the clerk coming with the manager (who happens to be black), she changes her tune. How could she, with her mixed-race great-granddaughter, ever make a racist remark to the clerk? And she really does need to buy some baby food. The clerk isn't impressed, but the manager is. He approves the check. Desiree returns. In the meantime, Ruby's heart has softened a bit. She was only feigning love for Whitney earlier, but the kid's gotten to her. She wants to be part of her life. Maybe she will renew her driver's license.

COMMENT: This was a pretty good sketch. Another example of the power of love and how it can melt even the hardest of hearts. Here we see both sides of Ruby: the ugly, racist side, and the warm and caring side. She was very reluctant to be associated with baby Whitney at first, until it became advantageous for her to do so. After the manager left, she could have reverted back to her bigoted rejection of Whitney, but she didn't. What had been feigned affection has become genuine affection. A cute baby will do that. When Ruby passes on and she's standing at the Pearly Gates, St. Peter (or whoever's minding the door) is going to have a hard time deciding which way she's going...

SHORT BIT:

Her Royal Highness is introduced to Mother Teresa. This inspires HRH to reminisce about the time she spent in India as a girl. One of her strongest memories was of a nanny who was taking them on an "awfully uncomfortable walk" being eaten by a tiger; they all laughed for days afterward. As for a donation, HRH offers to give Mother Teresa a new tea towel/head covering - it says "I survived the fire at Windsor Castle."

COMMENT: HRH is acting more like HRL (Her Royal Lowness). Good thing this HRH isn't real - but wait, she's a composite of several real royals. Not a pleasant thought...

LONGER SKETCH

Fern and Harry's daughter Sheila is about to give birth. Fern is being herself (tense, filled with anxiety and worry), while Harry (George Segal) is also being himself (calm and relaxed). Fern

has a hard time accepting the New Age birth procedures her daughter's using, while Harry is a bit more rational about things. We've got an ambulance and a doctor standing by, he reminds Fern. No use, she's still uptight. Why can't Sheila give birth the old-fashioned way - numb from the waist down and high as a kite? She goes to check on her daughter but is told in no uncertain terms (and a certain hurled object) to get out. Finally, the baby is born. It's a boy. Fern and Harry have a grandson! Everybody is happy. Harry lights up a cigar in celebration ("Put it out!" cries Fern from the other room).

COMMENT: This was also pretty good. I wonder why George Segal took over the role of Harry from Michael Tucker? I suspect that Michael must not have been available. But George does a fine job as Harry. The role is in good hands. Meanwhile, Tracey gives her usual excellent performance as Fern. What more needs to be said?

SHORT BITS:

Chic: For several years, he and his brother have been saving money to bring their mother over to America. But they've had several setbacks. One time, Chic needed the money to purchase his cab medallion. Another time, his brother had to undergo emergency surgery - a hair transplant (Chic was the donor). And now? They've just taken their dates to see "Victor Victoria" on Broadway. So it's back to square one...

COMMENT: Chic as a hair donor - it figures. Will they ever save enough to bring her over? Somehow, I doubt it.

Trevor Ayliss: He remembers the time that the mother of his school friend Keith tried to proposition him. Keith's mother was dressed to kill - every schoolboy's fantasy (except Trevor's). She bumped into him at a birthday party, gave him a big kiss, groped him where no woman's been before (or since)... Afterwards, he gets violently ill. His older brother couldn't believe that he didn't care for the encounter (little did he know...)

COMMENT: Keith's mother sounds a bit like Patsy Stone ("Ab Fab"). I wonder what Trevor's schoolboy fantasy was?

CLOSING: Back to mother's. Seems that Tracey has had second thoughts about the mean ending to the opening. Must be a British thing. No need to be alarmed, though; everybody loves everybody else (and we get a group hug, to boot). It's all so American!

COMMENT: From one extreme to the other. Why not settle for the happy medium?

OVERALL COMMENTS (Feb. 3, 1997): Once again, I liked Ruby's sketch the best. It wasn't as good as the alien encounter from last week, but it wasn't bad. The jokes this time weren't as ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing), but the insights into the human condition were just as - insightful.

4. Las Vegas (Feb 08 1997)

OPENING: Tracey and husband Allan are heading out the door for a quick visit to Las Vegas to renew their wedding vows (she's wearing her bridal gown), to golf (well, he is, at least - and he's already dressed for it), and to gamble (they've already got their cups of quarters).

MAIN SKETCH: There was really only one sketch this week, with several interlocking

storylines.

A flight from New Zealand to San Francisco is diverted to Las Vegas because of bad weather in SF. On board are Trevor, who's working this flight, British MP Timmy Bugge (pronounced "B-yewg") (Tim McInnerney, replacing Hugh Laurie) and wife Virginia (Tracey). Virginia is not happy with this diversion; after a stay in that "gastronomical desert" called New Zealand, she was looking forward to some excellent cuisine in San Francisco. She may be the wife of an MP, but she can't make the pilot put on night glasses and fly into a fogged-in airport. Timmy takes it all in stride and wants Virginia to do the same, but she can't: Las Vegas IS the home of Engelbert Humperdinck.

COMMENT: She **does** have a point about Engelbert <g>. And we now know how to pronounce "Bugge". I would have pronounced it "Buggy"; and Trevor did pronounce it "Bug". Of course, in Virginia's case, "Bug" might be appropriate.

Meanwhile - Linda Granger is rehearsing her act. She's making her return to Vegas at the Lapland Lounge. It's not a main room, like she used to play in her heyday 20 years ago; in fact, it's a strip club (but she hasn't figured that out yet). Those were the days, when she owned the town; Paul Anka wrote "You're Having My Baby" for her, in fact (false alarm, she was just late). But the last time she was here, the old MGM Grand burned down, and the town blamed her for it.

COMMENT: What a comedown - from the MGM Grand to the Lapland Lounge. But she doesn't give up, you have to give her credit for that.

Meanwhile - Ruby Romaine is backstage, helping a friend on this job. She can hide implant scars (a skill in high demand out there, no doubt). Last time she was in LV, she worked on "Showgirls", where her "beaver brush" got a heavy workout.

COMMENT: It figures that Ruby would have worked on "Showgirls".

Meanwhile - Trevor arrives at the mansion of top headliners Dieter and Gunther, German magicians whose act features tigers (just like Siegfried & Roy). They must be good friends from way back. They are not there, unfortunately; they're in Washington testifying before Congress. But Helga, the maid, is there, and she tells Trevor to make himself comfortable. It's good working for Dieter and Gunther, Helga says; for one thing, she always gets front table seats for Tom Jones. The downside is having to clean out Sasha the tiger's litter box.

COMMENT: I wonder how Trevor got to know Dieter & Gunther?

Meanwhile - Virginia and Timmy arrive at the Old Testament Hotel and Towers. Turns out that Chic was their cabbie (why a New York cabbie was working in Las Vegas, I don't know). Anyway, Chic gives Timmy a free pass to the Lapland Lounge, in case he wants to enjoy the town by himself.

COMMENT: Chic can read his customers very well...

Meanwhile - Hope Finch is in town working on a sociology paper. As she walks down Glitter Gulch, she describes Las Vegas as "light, sound, color and motion - greed, avarice, lust and desperation - hustlers, limos, heartbreak and neon dreams" Hey, a good Sophie B. Hawkins song! Suddenly, a car screeches to a halt! Hope has wandered into the street and just missed being run over by a drunk (he's still got bottle in hand). He thinks she's a hooker and offers her

\$250 to come back to his hotel room. She declines. He increases the offer twice, but she still refuses. She tells him he needs to get help, then she leaves. But he is smitten...

COMMENT: Can you blame him?

Meanwhile - Linda is being interviewed on local television while bathing in a tub filled with milk (nonfat). Is there pressure on her because of what happened last time? No, she doesn't think so. Besides, the fire marshal has a guest pass.

Meanwhile - the Bugges are in their room. Virginia is soaking in the tub. She wants a sleeping pill. She would like nothing more than to forget this unplanned stopover never happened. Timmy is watching the local nudes, er, *news*. Actually, he is watching an ad for the Lapland Lounge.

COMMENT: The sight of a man trying to break free of his domineering wife...

Meanwhile - Trevor sees the Linda Granger interview. He wants to catch her act, but all he has is his flight uniform. No problem, says Helga. She puts Trevor into a magic cabinet, spins it around, then presto! Trevor's now dressed in a totally white tux - a real sharp outfit! And take Sasha with you to get the full VIP treatment!

COMMENT: That *was* a sharp outfit. And I have no doubt that if I were to go out walking a 300 lb. Tiger, I would receive some special treatment, too. Please don't make the tiger angry...

Meanwhile - Hope is riding in Chic's cab. She wants him to recommend a good strip club. Chic doesn't know of her project, so he assumes that she's a lesbian. No, she's not - though there was that one time in the shower...

COMMENT: Interesting exchange between Hope and Chic. Chic would be a real good cabbie for HBO's series of "Taxicab Confessions", `cause he really gets people to confess their secrets.

Meanwhile - the Bugges are asleep. Virginia is, anyway, but Timmy's not. In fact, he sneaks out to go to the Lapland Lounge. On the way out of the hotel, he encounters Fern Rosenthal at a blackjack table. She and Harry are here as part of a group from their condo. They got a great package deal; in fact, it's cheaper than staying at home! But she is upset that no decent headliners are in town - no Vikki Carr or Jerry Vale, no Dieter and Gunther ("the only Germans we ever wanted to see").

COMMENT: Too bad there wasn't enough time to show more of Fern in Las Vegas. There would have been some priceless observations.

Meanwhile - Hope is backstage at the Lapland Lounge, trying to interview the strippers about what they're thinking when they're on stage. The interviews are going nowhere. Forget the interviews, says Ruby, you've got to get out there and do it yourself to really know what's going on.

Meanwhile - Linda's psyching up for her performance. Candy, her manager, warns her that this is a crowd of rednecks, not her usual audience (so no Jacque Brel tribute tonight). And he's still shielding her from the truth about the lounge.

Meanwhile - Tim arrives at the lounge. He is immediately spellbound and captivated by the women there. The show begins; the girls come out. Among them is Hope, who stands out in her not-very-sexy underwear. She's not particularly skilled in exotic dancing, but she gives it a go.

She works her way over to Timmy and gives him a lap dance-ish thing. Well, more of a knee dance, but Timmy doesn't mind. And neither does the drunk who was bothering Hope earlier. Well, maybe he does mind; he downs the complete bottle. The crowd is cheering, but Trevor (probably the only person in the audience who's there to see Linda Granger) wants them to show some respect for the "artiste" who's about to appear. One redneck doesn't take kindly to this; "You got the balls to say that to me?" No, but I do have a 300 lb. tiger, says Trevor. The redneck immediately quiets down. Linda comes on stage and starts to sing "Viva Las Vegas." Sasha perks up; he is VERY interested in Linda. So interested, in fact, that he rushes the stage and attacks her. The audience is shocked; Trevor is mortified; Timmy runs to rescue Linda.

COMMENT: It was very amusing to see Hope as a stripper and exotic dancer. It is not something you would normally associate with her. And that tiger proved to be very useful for Trevor; without Sasha, he would have been dead meat at the hands of those rednecks. And you got to feel for Linda; every time she comes back, life deals her another blow. But, she's still here.

The next morning - the Bugges arrive at the airport for their continuing flight. Timmy's clothes are all shredded from the tiger attack, a story that Virginia doesn't believe. Hope encounters the drunk once again. He finally learns her name. He's going to go back to LA, get into rehab, and pick up that 3-picture deal with TriStar. He is "Leaving Las Vegas." But he's still smitten with her. Trevor apologizes to Linda at the security checkpoint. She's in a stretcher, her body heavily bandaged. She doesn't blame Trevor or Sasha for the attack; it was probably the milk bath that attracted the tiger. She is grateful to have such a strong homosexual fan base.

COMMENT: And as we see Linda being taken to the plane, she is probably developing a new addiction to painkillers.

POSTSCRIPT:

Back in LA - Sydney Kross has just agreed to represent Linda Granger. A person attacked in a club which is insured by a tiger who belongs to wealthy celebrities - sometimes, you just want to get on your knees and say "Thank you, God!"

COMMENT: Vintage Sydney - it's what she was born to do.

OVERALL COMMENTS (Feb. 9, 1997): This was the best episode of this season to date. It was wonderful to see all of the characters interacting with each other in ways they usually don't do. This episode could easily have been lengthened to an hour, and it wouldn't have felt padded. Sequel, anybody?

5. Secrets (Feb 17 1997)

OPENING: Tracey shows us the communal restroom at the Takes On production offices (a unisex restroom, to boot). But she doesn't really care for communal restrooms, so she discreetly shows us her private facilities. And, concealed behind a door marked HIGH VOLTAGE, they will likely remain private.

COMMENT: I got a kick out of this opening.

SHORT BIT:

Kay Clark (care giver): Due to Mother's innumerable allergies (including her own skin), having a

pet was out of the question. But she did briefly own a pet bird, which flew into her life one day. She kept it in the attic and trained it to speak. One day, the bird flew into Mother's room and said, in Kay's voice, "Time for your medication, Mother." It said this 16 times, and each time Mother took a powerful diuretic. She lost 22 pounds in 9 minutes. This has remained Kay's secret until now. She also tells us she knows when Mother will die - never!

COMMENT: I bet Kay would love to have that bird back right now. Perhaps history would repeat itself. Then again, does Mother blame Kay for what the bird did? She'll never tell (not that she could tell if she wanted to).

LONGER SKETCH:

The scene is an L.A. cafe. Linda Granger is having a meal with her adopted daughter Marmalade, who does not seem to be prone to addictions. Marmalade tells Linda that she's pregnant and that she wants to find her birth parents. She wants to know their genetic background. Linda thinks this is a bad idea, harsh words are spoken, and Marmalade walks out. She's going to see Candy, Linda's manager. Linda calls him and warns him Marmalade is coming. Candy tells Marmalade that her birth records were destroyed in a fire at the orphanage. Not only that, the records of the lawyers who were involved were also destroyed. Marmalade is very skeptical, but she will not be denied. So she goes to the library and researches news stories about her mother from 23 years ago, when Marmalade was born and adopted. She finds a story about Linda going to India and confronts her with it. She's getting too close to the truth, and Linda knows it. So they meet at Candy's office, where the truth is revealed. The India story was planted by Candy to hide the real reason behind Linda's absence. You see, Marmalade's natural mother is - Linda! Yes, it's true! But having a daughter would have hurt her TV career, so she gave her to the orphanage. Sometime later, after cleaning up some of her addictions (and before getting new ones), she had a change of heart and got Marmalade back by adopting her. Who's the father? Somebody from the cast of "Mission: Impossible" (well, probably not Greg Morris). What a story. And Candy, ever the attentive manager, is going to pitch it. Who would play Linda - Meg Ryan? Sandra Bullock? Not if Marmalade can help it. She wants the part! Guess she really is the daughter of Linda Granger.

COMMENT: What a complicated life Linda has led! And you have to feel sorry for Marmalade. Imagine learning that your adoptive mother is also your birth mother! Imagine what that means for your baby ("My baby has your chromosomes - it's doomed!")! Imagine going through life with a name like Marmalade! (ooh) I must compliment Linda on her quick recovery from the tiger mauling in last week's episode <g>.

SHORT BITS:

Chic (NYC Cab Driver): People tell him all sorts of secrets. Why? Because, in his own words, he "doesn't give a s***." But if they don't tip him, all bets are off. He feels free to reveal their secrets. And he has nothing to hide - except his real name, his religion, where he comes from, etc.

COMMENT: It would not be a good idea to fail to tip Chic. Unless you keep your mouth shut.

Her Royal Highness meets Salman Rushdie. When she saw the bodyguards and armored limo out front, she thought someone amusing was paying a visit, someone like Madonna.

Interestingly, HRH likes Madonna and admires her disregard for convention - but she questions Madonna's choice for the father of her child.

COMMENT: Don't you just want to strangle her?

Fern Rosenthal and best friend Jovie (Julie Kavner) are discussing the secrets they've kept from their husbands. At first, Fern said she's kept nothing from her Harry, but Jovie gets her to admit that she bleaches her arm hair. Fern confides to Jovie that she's had a nose job. "That's a secret?" replies Jovie. How can it be a secret, especially when Fern's daughter has a prominent proboscis?

COMMENT: I've said this before, and I'll say it again: any pairing of Tracey and Julie is a good pairing. It can't go wrong.

LONGER SKETCH:

Janie Pillsworth is seeing her psychiatrist (Ron Perlman), whom she's been seeing for several years. Today, she makes a confession: she wants to be spanked. Stuart (Perlman) understands her condition. He tells her that this arises from her desire for some humiliation and submission, since she's normally a dominant person and in control of her life. He gives her some literature on the condition. That night, Janie tries to get her husband Gregor to spank her by messing up his New York Times. He is angry, all right, but he doesn't believe in corporal punishment. He leaves the bedroom and will read the paper online. Seems he's a bit of a cold fish. Frustrated, Janie tries to spank herself, but it doesn't work. One day, she visits a place called Spanky Panky. They treat their clients roughly - VERY roughly. It's too intense for her, so she chickens out and leaves. But she is able to get satisfaction from Stuart, promising a double fee if he'll spank her. He takes the paddle and steps into ethically questionable territory.

COMMENT: Why do I get the feeling that the marriage of Janie and Gregor is not a particularly happy one? He seems to regard sex - excuse me, intercourse - as a duty, one that he seems rather indifferent about. And notice how he calls her "Jane." Seems like a ripe situation for someone else to step in - and it looks like Stuart the psychiatrist is taking that step. I wonder what Janie sees in Gregor, anyway? He must be rich; money IS a powerful aphrodisiac.

SHORT BITS:

Rayleen Gibson: Did you know that she was almost born a boy? Yes - apparently she had a little bit of a penis at birth. It was removed and is now on display at the Rupert Murdoch Museum of Exploitation. But there must be a little bit left, because sometimes the scar will act up and itch whenever an attractive "sheila" passes by.

COMMENT: Interesting. "Rupert Murdoch Museum of Exploitation", indeed. Fear not, though; Rayleen is still all woman. I know her husband's glad about that <g>.

Birdie Godsen: Being the faithful wife of a militia member has made her realize the value of being prepared for the day when the Feds come swooping down in their black helicopters. She's got a rocket launcher in the yard, concealed beneath a playhouse.

COMMENT: I don't think I want to live anywhere near her! No, change that. I KNOW I don't want to live anywhere near her!

OVERALL COMMENTS: Interesting episode. Every sketch had its moments. But I wouldn't call any of the sketches classics - not yet, anyway.

[Commentary on TTO Season 2, Episodes 6-10](#)

[Commentary on TTO Season 2, Episodes 11-15 and the "Best Of" special](#)

The second season of TRACEY TAKES ON ... is Copyright 1996 Takes On Productions.
This summary, review and commentary is Copyright 1997 R. W. Reini.

Roger Reini (roger@rreini.com)

<http://www.rreini.com/>

[Back to the TTO homepage](#)

Revised March 09, 2000

Created by [Roger Reini](#)