

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

Part 3: Episodes 11 through 15, plus the "Best Of" special

Compiled by Roger Reini (roger@rreini.com)

This is a detailed episode guide to, review of, and commentary on episodes 11 through 15, plus the "Best Of" special, 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.

[Commentary on TTO Season 2, Episodes 1-5](#)

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

11. Money (Apr 02 1997)

OPENING: Tracey regards us viewers as investors and stockholders in the show, so she wants to show us our assets at work. One such asset (receiving a "disproportionate" share of the funds) is legendary comedy writer Jerry Belson, hard at work.

COMMENT: Anybody who can come up with lines like "Get me a Jew!" (said by Fern when Harry was in the hospital in the very first episode) is worth it.

SHORT BIT:

Her Royal Highness meets Shaquille O'Neill, star basketball player. She tries to sell him an honorary earldom, which carries such perks as two plowed fields near Runnymede, free tickets to Wimbledon, and the right to deflower virgins on mid-summer's eve. Just make the check payable to her....

COMMENT: Interesting perks <g>. Especially that last one <G>.

LONG SKETCH:

A cab is going down the road in an aggressive manner. This is Chic's cab, and his passenger is

not really a passenger at all but an IRS auditor (Steve Landesburg, "Barney Miller"). He's questioning several of Chic's business deductions. He's already decided to allow the high expenses for air freshener for the cab. He questions the clothing expenses (leather coat, etc.), but Chic is able to convince him that it's a uniform. But after all is said and done, Chic owes over \$1000 in taxes (payable in 13 days or else). This upsets him deeply, and he starts to complain to the auditor that his brother makes several times what he does, hinting that the brother (the one who has a falafel stand) is evading taxation. Hearing this, the auditor tells Chic about the reward program for turning in tax cheats. Brother is not happy with Chic, but he's got a plan: he'll rat on his cousin, who makes several times what he does....

COMMENT: This was a pretty good sketch. It might be an outside contender for the best-of special. I got a chuckle about the line where the auditor's going to allow the deductions for air freshener.

SHORT BIT:

Ruby is at the grocery store, saying it's hell growing old in America. It's not easy to stretch a social security check, pension and disability payments (for son Buddy) to make ends meet. What is this country coming to, when you can't use food stamps to buy cigarettes and liquor?

COMMENT: Vintage Ruby.

LONG SKETCH:

Fern and Harry (George Segal) are sitting with their favorite nephew, who's made some investments for them. What does he recommend now? Ostriches! Start at small with a \$12,000 investment in a breeding pair, and in several years, they could make \$40,000! There happens to be an ostrich farm an hour from their house, run by Avi Ben Zvi, an Israeli emigre. They do it. One day, they visit the farm. It's a modest operation, perhaps a bit run down. But Avi ben Zvi is devoted to his ostriches. He'll do anything for them. He's reluctant to let the Rosenthals visit their pair, but he relents. Just don't feed them that trail mix, `cause that'll really plug them up, he warns. So Fern and Harry visit "Steve" and "Eydie". They sing to the birds to get them "in the mood" (egg production has been low). And Steve seems to react to the singing; actually, he's reacting to the bag of trail mix, which he grabs from Harry's hand. He goes inside the pen to retrieve it. Meanwhile, Eydie is approaching Fern a little too closely, so she shoos it away. Unfortunately, her expensive tennis bracelet flies off her hand and into Eydie's mouth. Before long, Harry gets the bag back, but Eydie's on the loose. Avi is not a happy man. He calls the vet to retrieve the bracelet, but the vet's not in. Unfortunately, the vet's services won't be needed; Harry accidentally ran over Eydie. The results: Fern has her bracelet back; they have a trunkful of ostrich meat; and with the insurance payoff on Eydie, they'll have actually made some money.

COMMENT: Kinda ridiculous; kinda funny, too.

SHORT BIT:

Birdie says the tobacco industry's been very good to her husband. Why, just recently, after he said "No comment" to 60 MINUTES' Ed Bradley, he received a \$2000 bonus!

COMMENT: Ah, hush money! I liked the reference to the "Non-Freedom of Information Act".

LONG SKETCH:

We're watching the Family Spending Channel, and today's studio guest is none other than "Lisa Granger"! Fortunately, LINDA doesn't hold a grudge against the host (Jo Ann Harris) for her gaffe, so they quickly get to business. Specifically, selling Linda's new line of recovery dolls, which include the Loopy Linda alcoholic doll, the drug addict doll (a.k.a. "Barbituate Barbie" - its eye roll back) and the new sex addict doll (its knees bend back). People are buying them; some of the callers are people we know well (Trevor, Ruby). As they go to a break, Linda wonders how well the dolls are selling (she could use the money). But she never finds out, for just at that moment, a serious earthquake hits. The set is rocked, and things are falling everywhere. One of those things is a heavy bookcase, which falls on top of Linda as she's protecting her dolls. She hits her head on the table - hard. The break is over, and it is apparent that something's terribly wrong. The studio's a mess, and Linda's on her back in obvious pain. But she'll be back in 2 weeks, and she'll have a new doll: a concussion doll, featuring a real steel plate in the head.

COMMENT: How is Linda Granger like a Timex watch? They both take a lickin' but keep on tickin'! This woman is a Survivor. She may be a bit vain, but whenever adversity comes her way (and it comes her way quite a bit), it may knock her down for a while, but it'll never knock her out. There's a part of her character that's very strong, and I admire that.

SHORT BIT:

Rayleen is made up to look like Michael J. Fox. Before the stunt, she tells us about a new line of cosmetics she's offering, cosmetics with a uniquely Australian flavor.

COMMENT: Perhaps she shouldn't have mentioned some of those Australian flavors, like liquefied koala droppings...

OVERALL COMMENTS: I first viewed this episode under the influence of Nyquil cold medicine, which tends to knock you out. Consequently, I wasn't moved by this episode like I usually am. But watching it with a clear head a few days later made a big difference. Clearly, this series is best enjoyed when sober <g>.

NOTE: There appears to be a "Lost Bit" from this episode. The summary for this episode on the official TTO site (<http://www.takeson.com/>) mentions this bit: "Mrs. Noh Nang Ning pays protection money to a gang." Yet it did not air.

12. Race Relations (Apr 09 1997)

OPENING: Tracey tells us about the different ethnic characters she's played. She doesn't want to offend anybody - she wants to offend everybody!

COMMENT: I'm not offended (usually)... By the way, this would make a great sound clip.

SHORT BITS:

Virginia Bugge doesn't care for the blacks. They did not take good care of the summer house when she and Timmy had rented it to them. Oops - she misunderstood. She wasn't talking about black people (she doesn't know any); she was talking about Simon and Suna Black, the couple to whom they'd rented the house.

COMMENT: In the back of my mind, I can hear Gilda Radner (as Emily Litella) saying "Oh!

That's different. Never mind."

Fern's thoughts on the state of black-Jewish relations? Whenever Michael Jackson needs medical attention, he always uses Cedars Sinai Hospital.

COMMENT: That is true. What it means, I don't know.

LONG SKETCHES:

Now appearing in a production of "Driving Miss Daisy": Linda Granger and James Randall IV (Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs, "Welcome Back Kotter"). From our glimpses of a few moments of the play, and the audience's reactions to them, the performance is a success. There were a few glitches (the steering wheel on the car comes off), but nothing major. Everyone was wonderful. But James thought it stank. He's angry at the world, seeing signs of prejudice everywhere, even where they may not exist. He complains about his being the only black affiliated with the show (which is in Wyoming, which may explain the lack of minority stage hands). He thought he heard someone call him "nigger" (he was mistaken; somebody wanted to "jigger" the steering wheel back on). He is an angry, hypersensitive man. Later, Linda goes to his hotel room and offers to help him resolve his anger. Naturally, she offers him a copy of her book "I'm Still Here". He's not interested. She reveals that she's "octoroon" (1/8 black), and to prove it, she shows him her birthmark, which is located on her derriere. James wants to examine the "birthmark" more closely. Before long, they're in bed together. James doesn't want to word to get out that he slept with a white woman. No, he didn't buy her story about her being octoroon (funny, it worked on Louis Gossett, Jr.).

COMMENT: Thumbs up (and some other body parts up, for that matter <g>) to the outfit Linda wore when meeting James at his hotel room - a short, form-fitting black dress. About James: when we first see him as himself, he does rub everybody the wrong way by seeing prejudice and discrimination everywhere. That is a sad commentary on our nation, that we've allowed conditions that would generate such a reaction to persist. No doubt he's seen enough real prejudice. But there is hope, for as we saw, love can conquer all - or in this case, lust.

The scene is a courthouse - the jury room. The jury is a racially diverse group of individuals, and its foreperson is none other than Kay Clark. Everyone is arguing, and Kay can't be heard. It's so bad, the bailiff has to come in and calm everyone down. The prisoners in the holding cells were complaining, he says. After he leaves, Kay gets down to business. Drawing on her Sunday school teaching experience, she gets everyone to separate into their neutral corners. Two groups are established, group 1 and group 2. Group 2 (which happens to consist of at least 2 blacks and an American Indian) objects to being called Group 2. They will call themselves the Seekers of Truth....

COMMENT: I thought the whole jury was supposed to be a seeker of truth. In this part of the sketch (and in the others that will follow), we see nearly every racial and sexual stereotype there is. And there's a lot of them (sigh).

SHORT BIT:

Rayleen Gibson is in blackface on the set of "Rhonda in the Hood", starring Whoopi Goldberg and Della Reese. Rayleen's in blackface because Whoopi's stunt double broke her ankle, and there weren't any other black stuntwomen available on the set. Whoopi and Della didn't have any

issue with it, under the circumstances. Unfortunately, the Nation of Islam did take exception to it. Somebody notified them of what was happening, and now they have a large contingent (a million men?) looking for Rayleen. Gotta run....

COMMENT: Frankly, if I had a large contingent of Nation of Islam members looking for me under those circumstances, I'd run too....

Meanwhile, back in the jury room, deliberations have started in earnest. At issue: what kind of shoes were on the artificial foot of the defendant. There were a few comments to which the Indian objected, and one older black woman objected to being called a bitch by one of the black men. A vote is taken. It's split along group lines, with the 2 original groups being joined by the Estrogen Nation (the women). One of the white men in group 1 proceeds to make nasty remarks about gay people and sexually frustrated women (this remark upsets Kay)....

COMMENT: Prejudice in action. Whatever happened to "love your neighbor as yourself"?

SHORT BIT:

Trevor tells us about the time Nelson Mandela flew on one of his flights. He was impressed by Mandela, whom he felt truly made the first-class cabin first class. But then-wife Winnie was in club class; they had had a tiff. Funny how a man who could unify his country couldn't keep his family together.

COMMENT: That seems to be the way it happens.

Meanwhile, the jury has reached a decision. They'll order one bucket of original recipe Kentucky Fried Chicken, and one of extra crispy. One of the jurors wants extra white meat in the extra crispy bucket; she's shouted down.

COMMENT: We never learn the verdict. Then again, we didn't know anything about the crime or the people involved, other than the fact that the defendant had an artificial foot. Clearly, this jury is not going to beat the speed record of the O. J. Simpson criminal jury. But the verdict wasn't the issue here; it was the behavior of the jury.

LONG SKETCH:

Fern and Harry (George Segal) are at the shoe store, where Harry's trying on some new golf shoes. She leaves for the department store. Soon after, a group of five young, high-spirited black men come in looking for some shoes. Harry's a bit intimidated by them, but he relaxes after learning they are rappers (Big Sex-E and the Boot Knockin' Crew). Harry points out that rap has been around a lot longer than they think, proving his point by reciting an old Danny Kaye number. They think he's kinda cool, so they ask if he'd like to be in a music video (the "Jew snack man" - details later). He is interested in doing it. Then Fern returns to the store. She is VERY intimidated by the rappers and is fearful for her and Harry's safety. But Harry goes through with the video anyway...

COMMENT: There was an interesting exchange between Fern and Big Sex-E. Fern observed that the Jews got over their slavery experience. Big Sex- E says that the blacks will get over theirs as soon as the Jews get over that MF Hitler. Clearly, there's a way to go before common ground is reached.

SHORT BITS:

Chic tells us about the time he picked up Johnnie Cochran. He disagreed with Johnnie and said he could tell what ancestry their passengers were by the sound of their voice. He then describes how he can make people think he's black (by folding his you-know-what in half). Cochran didn't care for that.

COMMENT: No comment.

Mrs. Noh tells us about the truce between the police, the Crips and Bloods that was arranged in her donut shop in South Central L. A. The gang members bring their weapons to the shop, she gives them a chocolate covered donut. She got a citation from Chief Gates for that, and the gangs made her an honorary "Chink in the Hood" (even though she's not Chinese).

COMMENT: If it were only that simple. Nice attempt, though.

Meanwhile, Fern and Harry watch the video. He's mostly hidden behind a giant knish. Is that all? So whack!

SHORT BIT:

Sydney Kross doesn't have any problem hiring minorities - she has several on her staff - she just can't fire them!

OVERALL COMMENTS: This is a big problem facing America today, the state of race relations. We've made some steps toward reconciliation, but we still have a long way to go. Just look at the situations and stereotypes in these sketches. Will we triumph over racism and prejudice? We'd better, or else.

13. Supernatural (Apr 16 1997)

OPENING: Tracey tells us she'd love to have a supernatural encounter (ectoplasm shooting out of her mouth, abduction by aliens, those sorts of things). As she's telling us all this, we see one of the aliens which abducted Ruby earlier this season sneaking up from behind. But Tracey knows it's a phony. See the panty lines?

COMMENT: At last, a foolproof method for determining if aliens are real or not <g>! If it's got panty lines, it's a fake.

SHORT BIT:

Trevor recalls the time he had an experience similar to the "Twilight Zone" episode where William Shatner's character saw a demon riding on the wing of the plane. Or was it the Ecstasy he'd been doing...?

COMMENT: Note the reference to Shatner's "real hair" (now dearly departed).

Janie thinks she's a bit of a psychic, because she can predict trends. This comes in very useful in her position as editor of Manhattan Review. Recently, she had a vision of Calvin Klein's new line flopping big-time. Yet she didn't say anything to him, 'cause he's a big advertiser. Hey, she's psychic, not stupid!

COMMENT: Somebody get the motion sickness pills - methinks the Steadicam was used a little too much in this bit.

LONG SKETCHES:

The scene: a golf tournament. Golfer Midge Dexter (Julie Kavner) is in the middle of a terrible slump, never finishing higher than 34th this season. She's upset by this turn of events, and so is her lover and companion Chris Warner (Tracey). She'd do anything to get Midge back on track. Somebody hears her plea and answers. Unfortunately, he's an assistant to the devil, and his name is Bob (Matt Frewer) ("You ever hear of Christ? Well, I'm his Anti!"). He promises to give Midge golfing success. In return, he gets not just Chris's soul, he gets all of her. He gives a free sample to Midge, who knows nothing about the deal. With the special club, she blasts out of the rough and into the cup. She has a spectacular back 9! Chris signs the contract. She packs up quietly, leaving a note behind for Midge. As the weeks go by, Midge is playing as though her name was Tigress Woods. She is burning up the links. But she's not having any fun. There's a big hole in her life. Meanwhile, Chris may be with Bob, but she's resisting him every way she can. Why, she even carries a crucifix with her in the bath!

One day, Midge sees Chris from afar, but Bob drives up and takes her away before she can say anything. Midge follows them to the Motel 666 (figures), where Bob is about to have his way with Chris. Fortunately, Midge intervenes. But Chris can't leave, for she's signed the contract. But Bob will allow Midge to fight for her. If she wins, Chris is free. If she loses, both Chris and her belong to the devil. Midge agrees. The battlefield: the golf course. It comes down to the wire. If Bob sinks his putt, he wins. Chris prays to God for help - and She comes through. She sounds very much like Whoopi Goldberg (who is providing the Voice of God, by the way). She warns Bob that he's got a bad lie (and She never lies, you know). Midge gives him tips on his stance, but to no avail. He misses; Chris is free! God tells them to be more careful in the future and advises Midge to get a ring for Chris.

COMMENT: A nice sketch. For those who were waiting for this sketch, the wait was worth it. These two people truly care about each other, anybody can see that (well, maybe not hardened homophobes). You can see it in Chris's agonizing over every missed shot of Midge's. You can see it when Chris says goodbye to Midge (I defy anyone not to feel saddened by that). You can see it in Midge's lack of spirit as she's burning up the links. And you can see it in the golf match for their souls. The scene that drew the biggest laugh from me was the one where Chris is in the tub, taking a bath, and Bob comes in, expecting to have his way with her. She holds up a crucifix, and Bob doubles over in pain. And having Whoopi provide the Voice of God was very inspired.

Fern and Harry (George Segal) are talking about their finances. Since Harry's retirement, cash flow has been reduced. And their accountant has advised them to document all their expenses, so that means they'll be paying their maid, Bettina, with a check. And they'll be withholding her taxes. She doesn't care for that at all, so she proceeds to put a curse on them. Then she quits. One day, Fern is doing the laundry (something she's not accustomed to doing) and finds a chicken head in the basket. This freaks her out. So does the effigy of her that pops up from the toaster. That night, Fern dreams that Bettina is going to kill her. And it continues: while reading "The Joy of Hex", Fern sees that Harry has become a zombie! Something has got to be done. So they drive to Bettina's house, a hotbed of Santeria and voodoo activity (there's a cock fight going on inside). Bettina's in the back, and she's in control. Fern concedes everything to Bettina: she'll be paid in cash, and they'll cover her taxes. The victorious Bettina then tells Fern how to remove the

course. Some time later, we see Harry driving Bettina home. She is clearly in control here.

COMMENT: It sounds like Bettina is someone you don't want to mess with. Now if we could only get her to work for the IRS commissioner - or maybe the President....

SHORT BIT:

Chic tells us that he doesn't believe in the supernatural - but he *can* make something rise on demand (no need to say what that something is - this is Chic, remember)....

COMMENT: Figures.

LOST SKETCHES: The episode guide for this episode on the official TTO site mentions two short bits that did not make the air. I suspect they were trimmed for time considerations. In one, Linda does a commercial for the "Psychic Buddies Network"; in the other, Sydney dreams that Tyrone Power's ghost wants her to take his case. Outtake reel or tape, anybody?

OVERALL COMMENTS: If HBO hasn't renewed TTO for next season, something's wrong with them! How else will we get our annual dose of Midge and Chris? But I don't think we need to be concerned.

14. Politics (Apr 23 1997)

OPENING: In an attempt to emulate the success of Betty Boothroyd, speaker of the House of Commons in Britain, the top staff of TTO is composed of all women. Men are kept around so they can harass the women at the copy machines, etc.

COMMENT: Speaking as a man, I don't think I care for that arrangement <g>

SHORT BITS:

Chic thinks all politics is BS. But he can't understand why we Americans freak out every time a politician gets the urge to show his "Washington Monument" (so to speak). Leaders have to think, and no man can think without having sex 4 or 5 times a day....

COMMENT: He's right about all politics being BS. Washington Monuments <g>...

Virginia notes that there hasn't been a good man as Prime Minister in Britain since Margaret Thatcher.

COMMENT: OK.... I would suspect she views the current (April 1997) campaign as a contest between the evil of two lessers (Major and Blair).

In Mrs. Noh's homeland, you vote the way the government tells you, or you get a baton smashed into your kidney.

COMMENT: Ouch! Not very cool at all.

LONG SKETCH:

The scene is the first class galley on board a jet, where Trevor and a co-worker are hard at work. Turns out Senator Randall Stevens (Nicolas Coster) is on board. Trevor knows him (no, not in THAT sense); he had a run-in with the senator a few years back....

We flash back to a fancy Washington restaurant, where Trevor is escorting his old friend and colleague Mallory (Marcia Strassman). She is a wealthy woman (courtesy of her late husband), and she has attracted the attention of Senator Stevens - who happens to be not-so-happily married. To avoid unwanted attention, the senator will invite Mallory and Trevor to his room for a nightcap. But once safely out of the public eye, only the senator and Mallory will actually go inside. Trevor will leave via an obscure freight elevator. Only one Secret Service agent is in the know, agent Woodward. The next night, they repeat the game, this time at the reception at the Belgian embassy. The senator invites them to a weekend golf game. Trevor doesn't care for that, as it would disrupt his plans at home. Later, in the restroom, agent Woodward tells Trevor (in words I won't repeat here) that the senator is a notorious womanizer who's done this before, thanks to the help of people like Trevor. Mallory is headed for heartbreak, and Trevor's going to put an end to it. So he refuses to play his part. He takes Mallory home. The senator is not happy with Trevor. And neither is Mallory; they haven't spoken since.

Back to the present, where Trevor will make sure the senator is feeling comfortable. He asks how "Mrs. Stevens" is doing (is she his wife?), suggests some in-flight movies - "Disclosure", "Fatal Attraction", "An Affair to Remember" - and makes sure he's **very** secure in his seat. The ever-present Secret Service agent Woodward winks approvingly.

COMMENTS: This was a pretty decent sketch. Trevor was clearly in an awkward situation and managed to extricate himself and Mallory with a minimum of damage. I thought the personal attention Trevor gave to the senator was perfect. And the words that agent Woodward used to describe Senator Stevens - well, let's just say they're comparable to the ones Sydney used in her short bit in the Sex episode. What a sound clip that would make <g>. It's too bad that stuff like this goes on in real life.

SHORT BIT:

Ruby is at the store with son Buddy, who was the Taystee Bread boy in the 50's. Then he decided to enlist and go to Vietnam, where his experiences left him shell-shocked. He was never the same after that. At one time, he was living in Washington DC, near the White House. Others have gone from showbiz to Washington - Ronald Reagan, Sonny Bono, Fred Grandy ("Gopher" from "The Love Boat").

COMMENT: OK....

LONG SKETCH:

Fern and Harry are attending the meeting of the condo association, whose president is Jobie. Seems the association plans to raise the assessment to replace the plants in the lobby, and it also plans to require the wearing of "resident" tags in the pool area. One more thing: elections are coming up, but Jobie has been unopposed for the last several years. This is too much for Fern, who's upset with Jobie (apparently, their friendship has cooled). Jobie won't be reelected without a fight, as Fern gets Harry (George Segal) to nominate her. The campaigning begins in earnest. Stickers and posters are going up everywhere. Fern is getting a following with her position on the tags: "Tags are for dogs!" We see Harry sticking up stickers everywhere, including on the rear of the pool woman. Unfortunately, she doesn't know about the sticker; all she felt was the slap, which she thought was in poor taste. She complains to Jobie, who'll look into the matter. As

the pool woman leaves, Jobie sees the sticker and takes a picture of it. Later, Fern and Jobie participate in a candidates' debate. Jobie accuses Harry of sexual harassment and produces the pictures to prove it. Fern will not stand by and hear her husband insulted; she jumps Jobie, and we have a cat fight. It's broken up, but everybody else has already left. Deciding she doesn't have the stomach for politics, Fern quits the race. It's not worth the grief.

COMMENT: This was a microcosm of today's election process. It can be ugly. Little misjudgments can be blown up into Federal cases. Politics is a dirty business, and that causes the most worthy people to stay out of the arena. It's almost as if anybody who runs for office demonstrates that they are unworthy of holding office.

SHORT BITS:

Birdie and daughter are off to the "We Hate Hillary" club meeting (as in Hillary Clinton). In fact, her daughter is starting a "We Hate Chelsea" club.

COMMENT: Her daughter looks like a zombie.

Sydney's glad that there's such a thing as politicians. They give lawyers someone to look down on.

COMMENT: Ain't that the truth?

LOST SKETCHES: According to the guides on the official TTO site, this episode was to have featured HRH meeting with Bill Clinton. Too bad that didn't make the cut; that could have been a good bit. Note that the credits to this episode list Alistair Duncan appearing as Pip, even though he didn't appear.

OVERALL COMMENTS: I thought the episode was OK on first viewing, but it seemed to improve on second viewing, especially the Trevor sketch.

15. Music (Apr 30 1997)

OPENING: Sometimes, the album that's presented as part of a gold album award is not the actual album. For instance, one of Mick Jagger's awards actually used a Ray Conniff album. And what's the album that's in Tracey's gold album award? It's chocolate! Bit stale - but less stale than Ray Conniff!

COMMENT: Hilarious - simply hilarious! I was laughing all the way through the opening sequence.

SHORT BIT:

HRH meets Bob Dylan. After commenting on his frequent unintelligibility, she invites him to perform at the palace. The Queen Mother wanted Neil Diamond, but he insisted on being picked up at the airport (imagine that!). The younger royals wanted Oasis or the Stone Temple Pilots, but there were fears for the safety of the tapestries. Naturally, it's an unpaid gig, but he will receive a goose.

COMMENT: Don't do it, Bob!

LONG SKETCHES:

The scene: a courtroom. The defendant: a 17-year old girl, accused of shooting her boyfriend (now confined to a wheelchair). Her attorney: Sydney Kross. Sydney explains that her client was perfectly justified in shooting her boyfriend after he stood her up for the prom and took someone else instead. Much of her defense is delivered in song, in the form of the Janis Ian number "At Seventeen". It's very effective; when Sydney's finished, the judge (who is a woman, by the way) says "Hang him!", referring to the boyfriend.

COMMENT: This sketch hearkened back to the days of "The Tracey Ullman Show" on Fox, which as you know had several sketches with integrated musical numbers. Some worked better than others. This sketch is one of the better ones. And it worked.

Chic picks up a fare, a man of Pavarottian proportions. He is a star tenor, and he's in a hurry to get to the opera house for tonight's "Carmen." On the way, they talk about a disc he made (for the children, or for the money?). When they arrive at the opera house, the tenor rushes in without paying. Naturally, Chic is upset. He wants his \$7.50. So he decides to get inside the theater. That's no problem. But then he's handed a tambourine and told to go on stage. He does have the gypsy look, but his costume's a bit off. He approaches the tenor and demands his money. He is dragged offstage, but he refuses to give up. This time, he actually interrupts the opera when demanding his money back (in song, yet). The audience is shocked and stunned. But it works; he gets his money. He also gets in a few cracks about the opera - it's better to dance the macarena.

COMMENT: Best sketch of the evening. Chic shows no mercy to the tenor, either in the cab or on the stage. Well, he didn't deserve any mercy. I would have considered this a contender for the best-of special, except the lineup had already been determined by the time this aired.

The scene is a classroom at a juvenile detention facility. The young men were supposed to be listening to Michael Jordan, but he had to cancel. Instead, they are listening to Linda Granger. It becomes clear that they don't want to be listening to her, that she's not reaching them. But she gives it her all. She gives the "kids" the standard advice. And how do the "Kids" react?

"Somebody should shoot that b*****". Talk about a tough crowd!

COMMENT: "Tough crowd" is an understatement! But you gotta hand it to her: she doesn't give up. Anybody who's gone through what she's gone through is no quitter.

Erin McCall is at home. Her manager (Mo Gaffney) tells her that Jackson Browne wants her to appear with her old band Wild Child at a big benefit at Anaheim Pond. Erin is very cool to the idea. She may have a problem with her memory, but she can remember that she and the band had a nasty split. But that was 10 years ago (or was it 18?), and perhaps time has healed these wounds. So she agrees. Backstage at the concert, we learn that, in fact, time has wounded these heels. At first, everybody is happy to see each other, but it's not long before the old animosities resurface. Some of the band members (especially Paula and ex-husband Scott) blame Erin for destroying the band, for sabotaging a tour (she didn't want to leave her "pharmacist"), for hogging too much of the glory, for not giving them their share. They might have reason to blame her, for she says the band was all about her. Wasn't Blondie all about Debbie Harry? It becomes clear that this reunion is not going to happen. Erin is not going on stage with Wild Child, and maybe she's not going on stage ever again. Don't do that, say the caterers (the Roches). You've done some remarkable songs and influenced a generation of performers, they tell her. Then they start to sing "Bringing Me Home", and Erin joins in. It's a wonderful moment.

COMMENT: Even when Erin's there, she's not all there. Erin is a little too burnt out for my

liking; I prefer Summer Storm from TTUS. But I wouldn't mind seeing a flashback sketch of her before she burned out (from spiked wine?). When I first saw this, I thought it was a bit of a comedown, especially after the Chic sketch. Upon further viewing, it's not that bad. And "Bringing Me Home" was a wonderful song.

LOST SKETCHES: Two short bits listed in the guide to this episode on the TTO site did not make the episode. In one, Virginia recounts a rude rock star that she had to lock in her cellar. In the other, Hope remembers meeting singers from the Lollapalooza tour.

OVERALL COMMENTS: The first half of this episode was wonderful, on a par with the Las Vegas and Childhood episodes. The second half (specifically, the Erin sketch) didn't quite measure up to the first. Personally, I would have liked to have seen another short bit at the end. But this was a better-than-average episode.

16. SPECIAL: Best of II (May 28 1997)

Strictly speaking, this is not part of the series but a special. However, since it is related to the second season, it seems reasonable to summarize it in the second season guide.

OPENING: Her Royal Highness meets Tracey (from the Fantasy episode)

OPENING SEQUENCE: An extended version of the standard opening, using the first and second verses of "They Don't Know" (the standard opening uses the first verse only). Of special interest: Erin forgetting the words (she does tend to forget a lot).

SHORT BITS:

Mrs. Noh on Food (preparing her lunch: eels)
Ruby on Mothers (she's been a good mother, she thinks)
Chic on Crime (his side business of arms dealing)
Trevor on Race Relations (meeting Nelson Mandela)
Fern on Race Relations (Michael Jackson and Cedars Sinai)

LONG SKETCH:

Rayleen on Childhood (being raised by dingoes)

SHORT BIT:

Fern and Jobie on Sex

LONG SKETCH:

Trevor on Childhood (growing up in the North of England)

SHORT BIT:

Birdie on Politics (the "We Hate Hillary" club)

LONG SKETCH:

Linda on Sex (the cable guy)

SHORT BITS:

Sydney on Sex (commenting on her recent partners)

Kay on Movies (and her surprising taste in films)

LONG SKETCH:

Fern on Money (the ostrich farm)

SHORT BIT:

Janie on the Supernatural (she's a psychic)

LONG AND MODERATE SKETCHES:

Ruby on Mothers (meeting her great-granddaughter)

Sydney on Music (singing to the jury)

Mrs. Noh on Fantasy (her tap dance fantasy)

Chic and Linda on 1976 (on the dance floor)

CLOSING: To the accompaniment of last year's theme, we see a few bloopers.

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](#)