

# "Tracey Takes On..." Season 3 Episode Guide, Review and Commentary

## Part 2: Episodes 6 through 10 plus the "Best-Of" special

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This is a detailed episode guide to, review of, and commentary on episodes 6 through 10, plus the "best-of" special, of the third season of TRACEY TAKES ON ..., the award-winning 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.

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[Commentary on Season 3, Eps. 1-5 of "Tracey Takes On..."](#)

### 6. Age (Feb 08 1998)

*OPENING:* Tracey covers several topics in her opening conversation -- her desire to fight the effects of the march of time with all sorts of special rejuvenating capsules, few if any of which work; her complaints about bad plastic surgery jobs; her wish to die at age 95 with both of her hips; and her praise of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the notorious "Dr. Death".

*COMMENT:* For my comments comparing this season's openings to those of the second season, please see my commentary on the "Agents" episode (found in [part 1](#) of the third season commentary). I had said that the openings this season were somewhat flat and didn't engage the viewer as much as in years past. That wasn't the case tonight! Tracey was in fine form.

#### *SHORT BIT:*

Mrs.Noh is preparing to bake some donuts, and she describes how people of all ages like them. As a baby, you like them because they're sticky; as a teen, you like them for their sugar rush; at 20, you like them because they're cheap; at 30, it's because you're on the go and you need something fast; all the way to when you die -- and the mourners get served donuts at your

funeral.

**COMMENT:** From her perspective, donuts are the perfect food. She's got customers from birth to death. And she's right.

Rayleen doesn't know how old she is for sure (she was raised by wild dingoes, you may recall); they had to judge her age by things like the wear of her back molars. But age isn't that important; if you feel good and everything's working all right, then you're in good shape.

**COMMENT:** She has a great attitude about it all -- and that's about all she has right now (recall the Loss episode).

Sheneesha doesn't want to start another black vs. white thing, but she has noticed that black women typically age better than white women. As she puts it, "black don't crack." Look at Lena Horne, Diahann Carroll and Diana Ross -- then consider Barbra Streisand. "The Mirror Has Two Faces" -- and plenty of other things...

**COMMENT:** This was pretty hilarious. Notice the comment she made about how it's nice for black people to come out on top once in a while.

#### *LONG SKETCH:*

The scene is the office of Professor Kenneth Tethering, a renowned physicist and mathematician who has surmounted the obstacles of being quadriplegic and having other serious health problems. His class is very popular, and one of the students who wishes to take it is Hope. She doesn't make a good impression with his wife Katherine (Joanna Gleason), and she starts out a bit rocky with him, but she makes it into the class. In fact, she makes it into his life; she'll be his new research assistant -- and it looks like there will be plenty of extracurricular activities. In short order, she's swept off her feet by him (figuratively and literally). She's madly in love with him, and the feeling appears to be mutual. Does the 25-year difference in their ages bother her? No, not really. But the whole situation bothers Katherine, and it should, for she's about to be abandoned. So off go Hope and the professor to her dorm room at Susan B. Anthony Hall. Suddenly, a crisis: the professor starts gasping for air. Hope gets to him with his oxygen in time, but when she plugs the wheelchair into the wall, the fuse blows. This does not appear to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. It's taking quite a toll on Hope. What has she done? Life with the professor is not what she thought it would be. She calls Katherine and asks her to take her husband back, which she does. Apparently, he does this every year to one of his new students.

**COMMENT:** What an interesting story. And what an emotional roller-coaster ride! We're soaring to the heights of ecstasy with Hope as she falls in love, and we're with her in the depths of despair as the relationship collapses. But she will bounce back, I'm sure. This sketch might be a contender for the "best-of" special.

#### *SHORT BITS:*

Sydney's in an examination room, having her eggs harvested for implanting when she's much older, say 65 and mellowed out. That way, the kid can help care for her in her old age. Finding a surrogate mother shouldn't be a problem. Now for a sperm donor -- calling JFK Jr.!

**COMMENT:** Sydney -- mellow?!? I don't think so.

Birdie once had a college professor who introduced her to the Rule of 33. Jesus, who was a carpenter, died at age 33. Karen Carpenter, the singer, also died at age 33. Therefore, Karen Carpenter was the Second Coming of Christ! But now that she's been exorcised of this heretical belief, she tells her daughter that Jesus died at 34, so the Rule of 33 never comes up.

**COMMENT:** What a screamer of a concept: Karen Carpenter as the Second Coming! Now she *did* have a heavenly voice, but she wasn't the Second Coming. And I bet there were some people who thought she was the Antichrist. But I digress....

**LONGER SKETCH:**

Fern's reading by the pool when Otto Cornowitz stops by. He's very much taken with her, and he wants her to give him a great honor. He proposes marriage. But Fern's not interested. What does she need with sex? Besides, he's too old and has a condo with a lousy view. Is he after a nurse or a purse? Neither, swears Otto. He'll do some pushups to prove that he's in good shape. Fern goes on and on about how she's not perfect, how she wouldn't be a good wife. Suddenly she notices Otto laying on the ground. He only managed one pushup before collapsing and dying. That was the third proposal this month! Time to cut back on the jewelry....

**COMMENT:** Rich widow becomes target of men with dubious motives -- personally, I don't think Fern has anything to worry about. She can take care of herself.

**SHORT BIT:**

Her Royal Highness meets the now-grown Macauley Culkin. She observes that he's not very interesting anymore. But there may be hope for him when he becomes very, very old. He might become cute again, just like the Queen Mother or Carol Channing.

**COMMENT:** Is there anybody now alive whom HRH would find interesting?

**LONG SKETCH:**

The scene is Trevor and Barry's house outside London. His young son is staying with them for the weekend. The doorbell rings; that will be mother wanting to pick up her boy. While Trevor handles that, Barry is talking to next-door neighbor Dorothy Appleton (Judy Geeson), who's returning the soccer ball that flew over the hedge. He's explaining how Trevor became a father (no, he's not becoming straight). Finally, everyone leaves. Clearly, the visits affect Trevor and Barry differently. Trevor feels younger when his son visits, while Barry feels older. This sparks a tiff between the two; Trevor accuses Barry of letting himself go, of surrendering too readily to age, while Barry doesn't care for Trevor's attempts to delay the inevitable. But this spat doesn't last long; none of them do. For though they may have many differences, they have each other, and that's what matters.

**COMMENT:** Every time we've seen Trevor and Barry, there's been a conflict between them. But they've always patched things up at the end. They never allow their differences to destroy the feelings they have for each other. That's the hallmark of a solid relationship. If only all relationships, gay or straight, were like that.

Ruby talks about the pot-bellied pig Buddy talked her into getting. The pig would remind him of Vietnam, he said, so she got him the pig. It was a cute little thing at first, but now it's grown up. It doesn't do much, just lays on the bed all day. But it'll come if you leave some lunchmeat on the

floor for it...

**COMMENT:** OK....

**LOST SKETCH:** Linda goes to an underground driver's license renewal shop

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** This was one of the funniest episodes of the season to date (the other being the Hollywood episode).

## 7. Religion (Feb 15 1998)

**OPENING:** Tracey talks about watching the various religious programs on TV, how they're all asking for contributions, and how she and Allan made a contribution once, just to be on the safe side in the Afterlife. Then, asked to speculate about creating a religion of her own, she reveals the first commandment of "Ullmanism": Thou shalt always be funny.

**COMMENT:** I'd like to hear the rest of those commandments <g>! About contributions -- those televangelists almost sound like they're soliciting bribes: give to me, and you'll be saved! Hm, I thought it was God, through His Prophets and Manifestations, who did the saving.... and He can't be bribed! All the money in the world won't help anyone who doesn't have a "pure, kindly and radiant heart." Oops, time to get down from the soapbox.

**SHORT BITS:**

Hope describes one memorable college bull session/philosophical discussion which revolved around one religion. When asked the question "Do you believe in God?", one person said he/she believed in a God. After mulling it over for a while, Hope figured out that the difference between "God" and "a god" is the "a".

**COMMENT:** I'm not sure, but I don't think I get it. But I do remember those bull sessions from my college days. Personally, I believe there is but one God. Whatever our beliefs are, we need to resist this "my God is better than your god" crap .... hm, the soapbox is awfully tempting this time out <g>.

Ruby sends some Jehovah's Witnesses away. She's not interested in them or in Him. Apparently, these JW's were Hispanic, so Ruby observes that the JW's must be going downhill. Then she says she's never been particularly religious, and neither was her family. The closest she ever came to a religious experience was her work on THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD. But she was fired after being accused of nipping the sacramental wine from the Last Supper scene. She blames Angela Lansbury for that; in fact, she was happy to hear that "Murder, She Wrote" was canceled.

**COMMENT:** Tonight's view of Ruby is not flattering. Her racial prejudice is in full force tonight. To think that a religion is going downhill because of the changing racial makeup of its believers demonstrates a most profound ignorance. Will she ever learn that there is but one race -- the human race? No matter what anyone may say, God has not singled out one race or ethnicity as the chosen people. Hm -- I wonder what will be Ruby's fate in the Afterlife. She's got her bad points, to be sure, but she's got some good inside her.

Sydney talks about her favorite Bible verse: Isaiah 34:14, which mentions Lilith, whom Jewish legend describes as a she-devil who was the first wife of Adam, before Eve was created. Now if

Lilith had had Sydney for a divorce lawyer, she could have kept the Garden of Eden **and** the mineral rights!

**COMMENT:** If I were a lawyer, I wouldn't want to take a case where God was the opposing counsel -- **and** the judge!

#### *LONG SKETCH:*

The LPGA is visiting the hometown of Birdie Godsen this week, and Midge Dexter (Julie Kavner) is one of the golfers. Her longtime companion Chris Warner is there with her. Not everyone's happy to see them there; we see a protester carrying a sign saying "Homos Go Home". And Birdie's quite upset, for she is Chris's aunt, and she does not approve of her niece's lifestyle. [**COMMENT:** She does have the right to disapprove] But she has an opportunity to do something about it. She contacts her twin brother Sandy (Tracey), a local preacher who runs a camp called "Straightways". Its purpose is to "cure" gay people of their homosexual desires by any means necessary. Brother Sandy's going to have a new client soon, courtesy of Birdie. She goes to the golf course to find Chris. Their reunion is innocent enough; Chris suspects nothing. She's ready to forgive the mistreatment she's suffered. But before long, she's chloroformed into unconsciousness. Birdie and the protester carrying the sign load her into the back seat of Birdie's car for the ride to Straightways. When Midge notices that Chris has disappeared, she contacts the police, but they are of little help. Perhaps she ran off with another lover, they tell Midge (albeit in more derogatory terms). Meanwhile, Chris awakens inside the compound. Matthew (Scott Thompson), one of Sandy's "success stories", tells Chris where she is and what she can expect -- some "electro purification". This treatment is more like torture. Meanwhile, Midge and her friends have discovered where Chris is being held. They drive there and force their way onto the compound. Brother Sandy's holding a service, but it's interrupted by Midge. But what's this? Chris shrinks away from Midge. The "treatment" has changed her. "Homo alert! Homo alert!", she cries. Midge is taken up to Sandy, who proceeds to lay his hands on her as he calls out "Homo be gone! Homo be gone!" Midge breaks free, picks up a large crucifix, and hurls it at the stained glass window. It shatters, and we see the light. And so does Chris, who's back to her old self. And so does Matthew, who finally rejects Brother Sandy and leaves with Midge and Chris. While Sandy's being beaten to a pulp, Birdie is feeling sympathy pains....

**COMMENT:** Religious fanaticism run amuck! This is exactly the sort of thing that's given religion a bad name over the years. To commit barbaric acts in the name of God -- it makes me sick. Fanaticism had turned me off of religion for several years -- but there are religions that haven't been touched by this disease. I found that out when I became a Bahá'í (but that's another story). Anyway, we have some Christians (Birdie and brother Sandy) who aren't acting worthy of the name. But don't think that this is a totally serious, heavy sketch, because it isn't. Consider the reference to HBO as "Home Bestiality Organization" or the effect of the oysters on Birdie's husband (he wanted to go forth and multiply very badly). This might be a contender for the best-of special.

#### *SHORT BIT:*

Fern is happy that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has learned that she is Jewish. Now Fern wants to give her some tips -- get bigger hair, acrylic nails, find a new country club, etc. They gotta talk....

**COMMENT:** This was hilarious! It might be a candidate for the best-of special -- a good candidate, in fact.

**LONG SKETCH:**

While at a cafe, Linda Granger is approached by a longtime fan, Jonathan Meade, who happens to be a writer. In the course of his gushing, he tells her that "VIP Lounge", her old series, was what inspired him to be a writer. And it just so happens that he's written a script that she'd be perfect for. It's called "Heavenly Peace" (think "Touched By An Angel" meets "The Love Boat"). She agrees, and she'll tell her manager Candy Casino (Seymour Cassel) about it. When meeting, Candy's concerned about Jonathan's lack of TV experience. But since Linda's so gung-ho on the project, he'll call in some favors and set up some network meetings. Later, we see Linda at church. She hasn't been to church in a while, not since she was Linda Wartkowski, and she's afraid that God has forsaken her as a result. But the priest who overhears her talking to God says that's not true, that God never turns His back on anyone. It turns out that he and the other priests in the rectory were also big fans of "VIP Lounge". He asks if she'd be willing to sing at an upcoming folk mass, and she readily agrees. The meeting with the network does not go well, for they've already committed to a similar project, but with bigger stars (Cher and Liza Minelli). And they offer a job to Jonathan to write for the series. So Linda loses another job, but she's gained a bigger deal: a firm commitment from God. And she's a hit with the priests at the rectory when she sings "From A Distance."

**COMMENT:** The sketch with Birdie and Chris showed how bad misused or misguided religion can be. Here, we see the positive benefits of religion. We have Linda, who will be the first to tell you that she's not perfect, that she's done some heavy-duty sinning (as have we all), having her faith in God restored, reawakened, reborn. He never rejects us, though we may reject Him. This, too, might be a candidate for the best-of special.

**SHORT BITS:**

Kay recalls the time she and Mother went to a Benny Hinn rally (he's an evangelist specializing in "miracle cures"). Unfortunately, there were so many people there, they couldn't get in. But while listening to the sermon in the parking lot, a miracle did happen: Mother walked for the first time in 40 years. Was it divine healing -- or the threats of the Chicano gang member? As Kay puts it, "God works in mysterious ways -- especially in the Valley!"

**COMMENT:** I liked that last line -- it's very quotable.

Her Royal Highness meets His Holiness Pope John Paul II. Religiously speaking, they're on different sides, she reminds him as she briefly describes the Church of England breaking away from Rome during the reign of Henry VIII. As for Heaven, it surely can't compare to the life of a royal, so when she gets there, it's bound to be a tremendous disappointment.

**COMMENT:** With an attitude like that, I question whether HRH will ever get close enough to Heaven to be able to compare it to her current life.

**LOST SKETCHES:** Rayleen explains why she crosses herself before every stunt (and she admires Jesus for doing His own stunts); Mrs. Noh talks about religion in her homeland and describes a traditional funeral.

**COMMENT:** These sounded like they could have been good.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** This was the best episode of the season to date. It wasn't perfect, but it was very close. The two main sketches could each be contenders for the season-ending best-of special.

## **8. Man's Best Friend (Feb 22 1998)**

**OPENING:** Tracey tells us about how Binky Beaumont once became **very** friendly with a stuffed teddy bear, how Allan would prefer dogs that don't crap [*wouldn't we all?*], and how their Cavalier King Charles spaniel Eloise looks an awful lot like Kate Moss.

**COMMENT:** Upon being informed of this, Kate wasn't too thrilled. Understandable....

### **SHORT BIT:**

We see Birdie Godsen driving with the family dog, Deuteronomy. It seems that the dog has let loose with a stream of "Satan's lemonade" one too many times, so in accordance with the advice of Matthew 5.119, she's casting her out. She stops the car, opens the door, and tells the dog to "run to the Lord." But she'd prefer to stay, so Birdie tells her to get. Now why would God take away a little boy's dog?

**COMMENT:** Um, who's taking away the dog, now? Birdie irritates me. She gives the word "Christian" a bad name, sad to say. She's not acting very Christian here -- more like a hypocrite.

A general comment -- nearly all of Tracey's characters have flaws, but they do have some redeeming values. I'm sorry to say that I haven't seen anything in Birdie that's redeeming. Maybe I'm not looking hard enough. Maybe we'll see it next year.

### **LONG SKETCH:**

We see Linda in the dressing room of a San Fernando Valley hotel, having finished another performance in the lounge. There's a knock at the door. It's Trevor with a bouquet of flowers for his favorite performer (she has a strong homosexual fan base, you know). He'd really like to see her perform in bigger venues and markets. As it turns out, she's been invited to perform in London (Judy Carne was unavailable). But that would require leaving her faithful companion Mr. Woo behind, because Britain has a mandatory six-month quarantine on animals entering the country. How to resolve the dilemma -- would Trevor be willing to smuggle Mr. Woo on board? The answer is yes, for we see them preparing to tranquilize Mr. Woo with some of Linda's leftover supply of drugs. She's tempted to take some herself, but Trevor stops her. With the dog knocked out, he can be packed in a box with other stuffed toys. It's an extremely nervous Trevor who passes the box through security. There are some close calls, but he is successful. Mr. Woo goes in the hold. The flight begins, and things are looking good. Linda finds time to get to know the guy sitting next to her -- that's "know" in the Biblical sense. But trouble develops. There's an electrical malfunction. The plane may have to make an unscheduled stop. Fearing the worst, Trevor checks the hold. Mr. Woo has escaped! We see him wandering the hold, doing his thing on Mel Gibson's luggage. It turns out that the plane has to land in Goose Bay, Labrador. Janie Pillsworth is not happy about being stuck at the curling rink in Goose Bay. The dog is found, but Linda plans to "adopt" him and bring him home to L.A. The London gig has been canceled, unfortunately, and Linda is upset. But Trevor reminds her that she's got a captive audience. The show will go on!

**COMMENT:** This was a pretty good sketch, one that might be a contender for the best-of special. Linda had a great line about the effects of the tranquilizers on Mr. Woo, how he might want sex -- "well, that's what it did for me." She must have caught a whiff of some dust from the pills, as she was becoming intimate with her companion. Janie was good in her cameo appearance. Yes, she'd be very upset about being stranded in such a remote area with only 12 hotel rooms, all of which were occupied by the Mel Gibson brood! We saw a side of Linda we haven't seen before, where all the pressures have gotten to her and she starts to cry. She's tired of being resilient all the time, she says. Who can resist being moved by her anguish or by her recovery?

**POSTSCRIPT:** This sketch had the characters in Canada. In an interesting coincidence, the weekend this originally aired on HBO in the US, Tracey herself was in Canada (in Toronto, not Labrador) on a promotional tour.

**SHORT BIT:**

Fern arrives home after doing some shopping. She's been followed by a big yellow dog -- the same dog Birdie had cast out. Fern's not happy about this; she's not a dog person, or any kind of a pet person, for that matter. The smell, the upkeep, the end of nice furniture -- ick! Show me a Jew who has a pet, she says, and she'll show you someone who's married outside the faith!

**COMMENT:** Is that so? Well, there are people who don't care for pets, and Fern happens to be one. Give her credit, she is honest about it.

**LONG SKETCH:**

In a masterful bit of parking (try telling that to the guy who owns the car in front), Ruby Romaine pulls in front of her house. She's concerned about the dog next door, whom she calls "Raging Bull". He's rather menacing. As she walks to the door, the dog's chain pulls loose, enabling him to run after her and bring her down to the ground. He then proceeds to get very intimate with her. She complains to the neighbor, but he won't listen to her. So she asks for help from her old friend Dean (Bruce Kirby). He knows how to take care of raging bulls or dogs or whatever by using a do-it-yourself neutering kit: two large bricks. Just clap them together, and "Raging Bull" won't be raging any more. He tries to approach the dog, but it's suspicious and won't let him get close. So he asks Ruby to use her charms to lure the dog into his clutches. It works; the dog comes, and Dean catches him. Back inside with Ruby, we hear a clang and then some yelping. The next day (or shortly thereafter), Ruby and the dog meet again. But this time, it's different. He's content to just lounge around the yard. And she's no longer afraid of him.

**COMMENTS:** This is another good outing for Ruby. Then again, has there ever been a bad outing for her?

**SHORT BIT:**

The dog visits Erin McCall, who's sitting down with guitar in hand. She's immediately inspired to write a song in honor of the "Big Yellow Dog". But when her manager (Mo Gaffney) arrives, the dog runs off, spoiling the mood. It was one of the best song's she's written in some time. Too bad she can't remember it...

**COMMENT:** That was a nice song. I'd still like to see a sketch featuring Erin before she



screwed up her head, back when she had short-term memory. She really came alive when the dog appeared -- perhaps this was a taste of what she was like before her problems started.

The dog visits Mrs. Noh's donut shop. Sure, she'll take him in. She's got a place ready and waiting for him -- the freezer! Ol' Poochie doesn't care for that, so he leaves in a hurry. This prompts Mrs. Noh to wonder why we Westerners don't like to eat dog meat. "It's better for you than donut," she says.

**COMMENT:** To us Westerners, the concept of eating dog or cat is instinctively revolting. It's just not done. So what if it is better for us than donuts? It's just not done!

**CLOSING:**

After the closing credits (including Tracey's "Go Home!") have played, we find Tracey walking to her car, only to find -- yep, you guessed it, ol' big yellow poochie. The kids see him to and ask to take him home. Tracey agrees, so everybody goes home. Or was this just a cute ending?

**COMMENT:** It was a cute ending -- and kind of a cute dog, too. I thought the ending was rather Pythonesque, with the end credits appearing before the end of the episode.

**LOST SKETCH:** The dog visits Kay, who wants to take her in but can't due to Mother's allergies.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** Another great episode -- that makes three in a row. Now that we've had an episode devoted to dogs, I'd like to see equal time devoted to cats.

## **9. Culture (Mar 01 1998)**

**OPENING:** We see Tracey riding on the upper deck of a London tour bus. She tells us she misses the traditions of home, where one's surrounded by culture -- the Haymarket Theatre, Trafalgar Square, the National Gallery, where one can really smell the culture [*sure it wasn't the pigeon poop <g>? - RR*], etc. On this great day for touring (*pause to wipe the raindrops off of the lens*), we then see Tracey and Mabel at the Tower of London. What's first on the agenda -- the tapestries, the Crown Jewels? How about the area where Anne Boleyn lost her head?

**COMMENT:** Another great opening! This brought back memories of my bus tour of London in October 1996. Luckily for me, I avoided the rain. A thought: I'd really like to see Tracey do a full-blown London travelogue. With her unique insights and commentary, the possibilities are endless. That would be fun <g>.

**SHORT BITS:**

Ruby talks about the time she and Buddy went to see "Miss Saigon" (they had free tickets from the VA Hospital). She's not into highbrow culture, but she was impressed by the production. So was Buddy -- he had a flashback when the helicopter appeared, and he ran onto the stage calling for a medic. He was pretty good, thought Ruby.

**COMMENT:** It figures.

Birdie describes the home school she's operating for her children, the Patriot Home School. The school colors are white and white (naturally); "Onward Christian Soldiers" is the school song. She's doing this so she can protect her children from harmful influences -- multicultural

activities, Holocaust awareness day, Cinco de Mayo, the Civil War, etc. She only teaches useful subjects like reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, marksmanship and taxidermy.

**COMMENT:** My jaw was dropping to the floor in disbelief and disgust when I was listening to Birdie! How can anyone seriously believe this stuff? Now Ruby has some bigoted opinions, too, but she does have her good qualities that help one to forgive her more readily. Not so with Birdie; she scares me. She may call herself a Christian, but I think Christ would be ashamed of her.

What culture does Fern like? Cultured pearls, that's what. She remembers the first strand of pearls she received (bought from Uncle Ben). When an identical strand was seen at a discount jeweler, there was a rift in the family, with accusations of price gouging flying all over the place. But the rift was healed when Uncle Ben circumcised baby grandson Ryan; he did a good job.

**COMMENT:** That's Fern for you.

### *LONG SKETCHES:*

Tonight's event at Susan B. Anthony Hall: a poetry reading by Scottish poet Rory Sinclair (Billy Connolly). The audience is listening politely, and one member of the audience is enraptured: Hope. She's very familiar with his work; we can see her reciting his poetry along with him. Afterwards, Rory's invited to the library for a faculty reception by Prof. Harron (Helen Mirren) for. Then Hope speaks to him, as president of the poetry society. Is there anything he needs? Yes -- to use the toilet! Afterwards, he tells Hope he doesn't really want to go to that reception, for there won't be any real drinks there. So they go to a nearby bar. Hope's been gushing about Rory and his work all evening, and now she gets to the point: she wants to lose her virginity to him. He's willing, so off they go to his hotel room. As they get ready for the night of love, there's a knock at the door. It's Prof. Harron, who also happens to be Hope's mentor. Hope hides in the restroom as Rory lets Ms. Harron in. She was wondering where he'd gone. No matter; she wants him. Not for his work, though; she doesn't care for that at all. It's trite and derivative. No, all she wants a meaningless night of passion. But Hope can't take it anymore and bursts into the room. She and Ms. Harron engage in a heated discussion about Rory's work. Meanwhile, Rory's indulgences have caught up to him, and he runs into the bathroom to throw up. Looks like nobody's getting lucky tonight. But Sam Shepard is coming to campus next month...

**COMMENT:** Another good Hope sketch, as usual. She is really hung up on how she's going to lose her virginity. This will probably mean she won't lose it anytime soon (which may actually be a good thing).

Sydney is having a very bad day. She's ready to tear the head off of anyone she encounters (figuratively for sure, and maybe literally, too). She heads to the restroom and throws out the sole occupant. She tells us she's never been much for culture; in fact, she's never seen an act 2 of any play she's been to for the last 15 years. All that changed with her exposure to "Riverdance". It relaxes her, she says as she begins to dance to the music. It allows her to pound her tension into the floor. But her tension rises again as another dancer appears. It's Dueling Riverdancers! They match each other move for move. Who will win? It's Sydney, as she takes out her rival with some moves worthy of Hulk Hogan. "Don't ever mess with the Lord of the Dance again!", she calls out in triumph. She won't stop until her shoes are filled with blood.

**COMMENT:** It'll take that long for her to get rid of all the tension she has! A hilarious sketch. You wouldn't think Sydney would be into "Riverdance"; she did say that music was "for pussies who don't know how to express themselves by yelling" (as a guitarist, I take exception to that <g>).

**SHORT BIT:**

Chic is in his cab, telling us how he once passed the time waiting for a fare by creating a little figure out of an empty pop bottle and other junk left by previous fares. His next fare offers him \$50 for it. Later, he sees it in a gallery for \$1500. Art out of junk -- what a concept. His latest creation: a mobile made out of condoms. He calls it "Blow Me".

**COMMENT:** Figures.

**LONG SKETCHES:**

Linda Granger is appearing before the city council, complaining about proposed funding cuts for the arts. She tells of her studying acting at age 13 in Bismarck, North Dakota. Unfortunately, she doesn't get time to finish her speech, so her point is somewhat blunted. But it was still a good performance.

**COMMENT:** Her heart was in the right place, at least.

Sheneesha Turner's on duty at her security gate at L.A. International Airport. We see a man (Rene Auberjonois) go through the metal detector, setting it off. He empties his pockets and goes through again without incident. Unfortunately for him, his briefcase is deemed suspicious. It's the Body Search Zone for him! The suspicious items turn out to be a heavily paperclipped manuscript. He's a book publisher, you see. Now Sheneesha decides to pitch her book idea, appropriately entitled "The Body Search Zone." He's reluctant to commit to the idea, as his house specializes in high-culture books. But when Sheneesha threatens to subject him to a full body cavity search, he decides her idea's a good one after all. They arrange an appointment for the next time he's in town.

**COMMENT:** If the inspiration for Sheneesha works at LAX, remind me never to fly out of there. I will regret it.

**SHORT BITS:**

Trevor talks about the various international airline crews who stay at the LAX Marriott hotel (Alitalia, Swissair, Qantas, Varig, the Middle Eastern airlines). His crew typically hangs out with the girls from Virgin. As he puts it, he's never seen an airline more inappropriately named....

**COMMENT:** Great bit.

Rayleen is upset that Americans don't have enough of an appreciation of Australian culture. It's not just shagging sheep and throwing shrimp on the barbie, you know. There's the Sydney Opera House, the great collections of driftwood and boomerangs, the Aboriginal Song Festival at Ayers Rock, etc. They've got culture comin' out the wazoo Down Under!

**COMMENT:** No comment about the sheep <g>

Kay notes that when Mother was first diagnosed with her multiple ailments, the doctors were very interested in her various cultures. In fact, her mucus is considered important to medical research. One time, an overzealous resident accidentally removed Mother's uvula, but it was retrieved. They've kept it in a jar to this very day -- the "little fishie".

**COMMENT:** This reminds me of an old Saturday Night Live sketch devoted to the National Uvula Association. What use is the uvula, anyway?

**LOST SKETCH:** Mrs. Noh describes Asian opera

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** Another great episode. It seems like most of the great episodes have been in the second half of the season.

## **10. Sports (Mar 08 1998)**

**OPENING:** Tracey describes her typical jog through Hyde Park in London as she progresses to her goal: Harvey Nichols in Knightsbridge. Then it's time to give something else a workout: her American Express card! As she puts it, there's nothing like spending some £ to kick in those endorphins <g>

**COMMENT:** She didn't even mention the weight training resulting from bringing those shopping bags home <g>! I really enjoyed these last two openings, where she got out of that studio and went on location. I'd like to see more of that next season.

**SHORT BITS:**

Chic talks about the national sport in his home country: filling a goat's bladder with water, tying the end of it off, and kicking it around a long field. How long does it last? Depends on if you have a strong or weak bladder.

**COMMENT:** Does he mean the bladder that's being kicked, or the bladders of the participants?

Linda pauses her workout to describe some foul treatment she received at the Celebrity Battle of the Sexes competition several years ago. It was at the hands of the kayaking team of Reggie Jackson and Raymond Burr -- seems Reggie knocked her on the head with his oar. Suddenly, her train of thought is interrupted -- time to get back to work filming her exercise video.

**COMMENT:** OK....

**LONG SKETCH:**

At Santa Anita, Ruby tells us her secrets for winning with the horses. If the horse has a name she likes, she bets on it. Example: Vodka Stinger. Also, if she sees a horse take a dump in the paddock, then it'll be lighter and springier, so she'll bet on him (tip courtesy of Frank Sinatra). Sure enough, Vodka Stinger wins, so she deposits her winnings in the Maidenform Bank & Trust (i.e., her bra). She's having a good day. Meanwhile, Jimmy Duff (M. Emmet Walsh) is having a bad day. He's being threatened by some goons whom he owes money (or he owes their boss). Suddenly, he notices Ruby and is able to postpone his fate. It turns out that Jimmy and Ruby knew each other way back when, but the relationship ended badly when he abandoned her in remote Arizona, after taking her pocketbook. She wants nothing to do with him. But he's able to soften her up a bit, and after a nice musical number ("You Do Something To Me"), they go for a

romp in the hay. Meanwhile, Ruby had bet on "Old Flames", who happens to win. She's won big! Jimmy offers to pick up the winnings (it'll be faster), so she gives him the ticket. But he has plans of his own for that money; he'll use it to pay off the goons. Imagine his surprise when he finds he's been given a losing ticket! The enforcers then get ready to do some enforcing on Jimmy. Meanwhile, Ruby collects her winnings. She's not soft in the head, you know. Where will the money go? Towards new patio furniture and some new teeth for Buddy.

**COMMENT:** This was a pretty good Ruby sketch. Then again, they all are. I especially liked her reference to the "Maidenform Bank & Trust". And the musical interlude wasn't bad, either. I'll repeat what I've said before: when she keeps her racist thoughts to herself, Ruby can be a very interesting lady. It'd be interesting to see a flashback into the 40's or 50's, when she was in her prime.

**SHORT BIT:**

Fern tells us she's never been particularly athletic. After having an unfortunate encounter with rope climbing in high school, her mother wrote an excuse for her to get out of gym class. So for the next four years, she always used the excuse that it was her period and she had cramps. And she did the same thing for her Sheila.

**COMMENT:** Interesting excuse...

**LONG SKETCH:**

We see some schoolgirls running a race. As they get to the finish line... Janie wakes up. She was dreaming about her school days. Daughter Olivia (Mabel) and mother Jacqueline (Tracey) come to see what's the matter. Tonight is the night of the fashion awards, and Janie's up for best editor, along with her longtime rival, Paige Garland. She was a classmate of Janie's at Heathers. Flash back to 20 years ago and the day that Paige (Jennifer Jason Leigh) arrives on campus from "Evanston, Ill." (short for "Ildaho", says the young Janie). The girls are playing a game of rounders, and Paige joins right in, treating it like baseball (which it is, basically). She knock's Janie's pitch out of the park. Thus begins a heated rivalry between the girls. On one occasion, Paige cuts Janie while fencing; on another, Janie's javelin toss lands a little too close to Paige. In the aforementioned race, it's Janie and Paige neck and neck until Paige trips Janie to win. This whole experience turned Janie off of sports; she'd used them as a shortcut to popularity (that and claiming she was Peter O'Toole's goddaughter). And it continued into their professional and social life, as we see in a particularly competitive tennis match. And now they're up for the same award. Who will triumph? And the winner is ... a tie! Both Janie and Paige win. They're both gracious as they head for the stage. Then the competition resumes, as each is trying to beat the other. But nothing and no one will stop Janie tonight: she climbs onto a table, swings from a chandelier, kicks Paige into the dessert table and makes it onto the stage first.

**COMMENT:** It's unusual for me to feel sympathetic towards Janie, but this sketch did just that. But she's still a bit of a bitch. Compare her to her mother, who this week offers to turn on "Touched By An Angel" for she and Olivia to watch -- after Janie's gone. "Ildaho" -- what a riot!

**SHORT BITS:**

The scene is a baseball stadium, and Erin McCall is going to sing the national anthem. But the fans don't care for her rendition, pelting her with cans, cups and whatnot. And then there's the mascot... but it was just a bad acid flashback. No it wasn't, says manager Dusty (Mo Gaffney); she did sing the national anthem at the San Pedro stadium. How did I do, asks Erin. Oops, there's the phone (no it wasn't).

**COMMENT:** Dusty must run an awful lot of interference for Erin.

Her Royal Highness meets tennis star Pete Sampras. He's so dull compared to John McEnroe and Ilie Nastase, she complains. She used to play tennis; she had someone serve for her so she wouldn't have to perspire and could keep a hand free for important things, like her Scotch. She makes an offer for all the rackets he's hasn't broken in fits of pique; they'd make good tapestry beaters for Windsor Castle.

**COMMENT:** She does have a point about Sampras, how he's not as flamboyant as his predecessors.

Trevor wasn't into sports much as a child; he was always more of an equipment manager (which led to his first hallucinogenic experience, but that's another story). The only event he ever won was a spoon-and-potato race as a child, and then only by sticking the spoon into the potato (demonstrating with an apple). The one who was favored to win received some harsh treatment from his father afterwards; Trevor's felt guilty ever since.

**COMMENT:** Notice his comment about Aer Lingus (the Irish airline) -- how they might have had raw potatoes around.

**LOST SKETCHES:** Mrs. Noh talks about her champion racing cricket, "the Exterminator"; Sheneesha invites herself to a famous basketball player's house to discuss her son's career.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** Not a bad way to end the season. My only complaint is that it **is** the end of the season (not counting the Best Of special)

## **11. Best-Of special (June 4 1998)**

*OPENING:* regular opening

Chic on Sports (*bladder ball*)

Ruby on Sports (*at the race track*)

Trevor on Loss (*hair loss*)

Janie on Loss (*loss of sexual sensation*)

Kay on Smoking (*buying some medicinal marijuana*)

Hope on Smoking (*ashamed of her addiction*)

Janie on Sports (*Janie vs. Paige*)

Sheneesha on Age (*"black don't crack"*)

Sydney on Culture (*her passion for Riverdance*)

Birdie on Man's Best Friend (*casting out the family dog*)

Fern on Age (*another marriage proposal*)

Linda on Smoking (*her life story*)

Her Royal Highness on Age (*meeting Macaulay Culkin*)

Kay and Sydney on Marriage (*Kay marries the condemned inmate*)

Ruby on Agents (*her FBI career*)

Linda on Marriage (her husbands through 1981)

*CLOSING*: bloopers, flubs and outtakes, set to the first season theme

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