

Triple duty for Cheryl Hines, 'standing by' on 'Motherhood' shooting; Spade says don't look for practical jokes

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

Cheryl Hines and her "In the Motherhood" cast mates are "standing by," she says "waiting to hear when they'll be called back to complete the show's 13 episode order. For now, they're on hold. "We did the first seven, but we don't know when we're going back to shoot the last six," says the funny lady.

With the knockout talents of herself and Megan Mullally, along with the able Jessica St. Clair "plus the show's successful webisode forerunner "In the Motherhood" seemed like a can't-miss proposition. Then it got on the air and received a chorus of mixed reviews. Although it's had its hilarious moments, critics and everyday viewers have voiced disappointment.

However, "The show has definitely gotten better as we've been shooting," Hines wants us to know. She points out, "Pilots are difficult anyway. It's good to get past the pilot, and we've been finding our groove, which is great."

She says that she and Megan and Jessica "have so much fun working together, we have fun on the set, and we're hoping that translates to the show."

Hines has been doing triple duty with "In the Motherhood" shooting simultaneously with her beloved "Curb Your Enthusiasm," which is in production on its seventh season. And Hines also has activities attendant to the April 25 unveiling of her directorial debut film, the comedy "Serious Moonlight," starring Meg Ryan, Timothy Hutton, Kristen Bell and Justin Long. "I'm so glad to get to go to Tribeca. I couldn't be happier that it's premiering there," she says.

As for doing "Motherhood" and "Curb" at the same time, "It's definitely been an eye-opening experience," says Cheryl, "with 'Curb' being improvised and 'Motherhood' having a script, it's obviously different. On a comedy series, the script changes every day. That's been interesting for me, getting a new script every night and new script pages two hours before shooting."

FUNNY BUSINESS: David Spade reveals that he's often asked about the atmosphere on his "Rules of Engagement" set, with people assuming that he and his co-stars are often breaking each other up with practical jokes. The fact is, he says, "Though there's a general good feeling, and we're all happy to be there, gags aren't really part of the package. Like people in other fields, we put in long hours, have fun, but, with few exceptions, just concentrate on work." As far as he's concerned, stories of practical jokes among co-stars usually emanate from movie sets like "Ocean's Eleven" with Brad Pitt and George Clooney, "where multi-millionaire stars can engage in practical jokes because they have everything else in life."

FUNNY BUSINESS, TOO: "Saturday Night Live's" Will Forte tells us he was glad to switch things up and give voiceover a try in Fox's upcoming TV series "Sit Down, Shut Up," but he was just as nervous about his performance as he is onscreen. "A lot of times I'll be in a booth in New York doing the voices, and they're all on a phone line listening to me from Los Angeles. The only hard thing is, I'll be wondering if they're liking it," says Forte. "For my neurotic brain, I'm like, 'Oh, they hate me! They think I'm doing a bad job!' When it comes down to it, though, you're just talking into a microphone. It's a lot easier than people make it out to be."

Forte claims that the show, which premieres April 19, will only continue to get better as the season progresses. "There are so many jokes that hit right away, and then there are jokes that pay off way later. It is so rich with material. I kept getting surprised that each script was better," he says of the show written by "Arrested Development" creator Mitch Hurwitz. "It definitely has his voice and sensibility," adds Forte. "It's so fun when we do table reads. A lot of times it's hard to get everybody together, so Mitch will do the voices of the people who aren't there. He does the best impressions. I almost like him doing my character more than me doing my character, but luckily, he lets me keep doing the voices instead of keeping it for himself."

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A'CHANGIN': Interesting Bob Dylan video they're getting ready to shoot. We get word from casting sources that plans call for a tale involving a man who leaves a woman tied up, and comes home to find she's escaped. Then she attacks him, and they tussle. "Is this love or hate?" is the question, per the casting notice. Doesn't sound promising, to say the least.

With reports by Emily Feimster.

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