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Cleveland International Film Festival  
*The TV Set* Review

Jake Kasdan's *The TV Set* is a satirical look at the American television industry. The story centers around Mike Klein (David Duchovny), a writer torn between his artistic craft and his financial responsibilities. With his pregnant wife, Natalie (Justine Bateman), at home, he is pushing for a sitcom pilot he has written for network television. Mike is forced to make compromises with Lenny (Sigourney Weaver), the station president. She favors the eccentric comic Zach Harper (Fran Kranz) for the lead over Mike's subtler pick. Additionally, Lenny wants to get rid of the "suicide theme" which she considers "a downer" for audiences. The problem is Mike deems it essential to the story because of its biographical significance to him. Recently immigrated from Britain, primetime programmer Richard McAllister (Ioan Gruffudd) assures Mike that his view, the writer's vision, will prevail. Unfortunately for Mike, due to comedic considerations, things will not turn out too well for his "vision."

As a satire, *The TV Set* has nothing really new to say. The film makes the point that mainstream, evening television tosses aside artistic worth for economic gain. Networks must reach large audiences to justify their charges to advertisers. Competition with other networks causes them to cater to baseness and keep their shows vulgar and "sexy." Klein's "The Wexler Chronicles" does not survive the concept to TV process unadulterated, but that's no big surprise. *The TV Set*, unfortunately, covers very familiar ground with its cultural criticisms. The transformation of Klein's low-key, comedy-drama about a man attempting to deal with his brother's suicide to a broad sitcom set to be on par with hits like "Slut Wars" is by no means a novel idea.

Despite its faults, *The TV Set* is a hilarious character-driven comedy. An excellent cast includes David Duchovny as the beleaguered writer, Sigourney Weaver as the controlling network president, and Ioan Gruffudd as a Britisher trying to adjust to American life. Most amusing is Fran Kranz's character. Actor Zach Harper becomes increasingly confident and begins to overplay his role, at one point imitating Marlon Brando in one take of a scene. This turns off his co-star, Laurel Simon (Lindsay Sloane). Harpers off-the-set advances make for some of the funniest scenes in the film.

A comedy that lacks satirical genius, *The TV Set* fails to make any major emotional impact. It does, however, do a good job of making you laugh. So if it's a light-hearted comedy you're looking for, *The TV Set* hits the spot. But if you're looking for more sophisticated humor, this one falls a bit short.