

Michael Levine/Fox

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lie. The only one who seems to appreciate Charlie's bumbling parenting is infant brother Owen. *Party of Five*, like a soap opera, can hook you without your even knowing it. Fox (the network) is good at that (witness *Melrose Place*!). Now if we could just get Charlie to send Claudia off to music camp for a few months. Hey, just a few months!

—Michael Castner

Let's Review, Shall We?

Melrose Place • Fox

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So you've weaned yourself from *MP* for a year, and now you're scrambling to find out the haps. It goes like this: Jane's now the crazy one, with a long-lost drunk mother (Donna Mills), played with the *dramatique* style of Aaron Spelling diva herself Linda Gray. Kimberly is dying—again—and sets up Michael with a hooker to make him happy. Sidney's falling for a Richie Rich millionaire who dabbles in the software industry (wasn't that Alison's love interest a few years ago?). Alison is now whispering sweet, breathy whines in Jake's ears, instead of former fiancé Billy's. Billy is now concerned about Sam, the *artiste* of *Melrose Place*, and continues to express himself with that same skewed, sexy, angry, sensitive pout. In other words, he *still* hasn't taken acting classes. Amanda (Heather Locklear in yet another size-3 miniskirt ensemble) is pissed off at dismantled physician hubby Peter, who decides that he *is* in fact someone who plays a doctor on TV. Collagen Big Lips Lady (a.k.a. Taylor) is married to chef Kyle, but has the hots for Peter, her older sister's former husband and murderer. When she's not doing her Mrs. Potato Head routine, she and Kyle run a new restaurant. And it's a good thing, too. It was looking as though Shooters was the only joint in town where ex-lovers, alcoholics, and

A Shamelessly Fawning Review

Party of Five • Fox

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I love this show. I know that, to some, it's like admitting that you like Abba, but I don't care. Every week, the best writing, acting, and even music come together in a show that turns even the hardest TV watcher into a bowl of mush. The Salinger family lost mom and dad in a car crash and older brother Charlie (Matthew Fox) is left to raise the brood. He screws up a lot, and every week, little sis' Claudia (Lacey Chabert) obnoxiously points out his every flaw. Scott Wolf plays Bailey, the college student struggling to become a man. Earlier this season, his drinking problem caused a family tough-love intervention. Wolf is an excellent actor who is now getting film roles (*White Squall*, *Evening Star*). *Hard Copy* is even chasing him (his high-school nickname was Scooter! Ooooooh!). Neve Campbell is the always suffering Julia, who also gets in her shots at Char-

10 TOP TEN TELEVISION SERIES



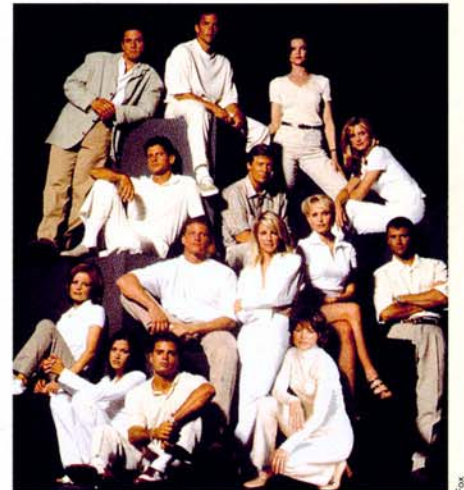
Andrew Eccles

- 1 **ER, NBC**
(tied)
- 2 **Seinfeld, NBC**
- 3 **The Naked Truth, NBC**
- 4 **Friends, NBC**
- 5 **The Single Guy, NBC**
- 6 **Home Improvement, ABC**
- 7 **60 Minutes, CBS**
(tied)
- 8 **20/20, ABC**
- 9 **Touched by an Angel, CBS**
- 10 **NYPD Blue, ABC**

Source: A.C. Nielsen, Week ending January 13, 1997

neurotics could convene to perform accounting *and* relationship duties for the intellectually challenged, but abdominally superior, Jake. Speaking of six-packs, Matt, as in the doormat and token gay character of the show, is being controlled by another superfreak booze-swilling boyfriend. Oh, and everyone looks fine with their Clooney-do's, sideburn swizzles, anorexic postures, and chiseled eyebrows. Except for Taylor, that child-bearing lips lass. She just looks *bizarre*. There is something strangely delightful in seeing these fashionable sociopaths squirm around the ultra-hip digs of West Hollywood, and if you choose to return to the Place and indulge in the sexual and deviant escapades of the gang, you might just get hooked. Or, just wait another year, and nurse your morbid addiction elsewhere.

—Rebecca Kraus



Fox