



John Bruce/ Daily Nebraskan

Brady Bunch is back for holidays

NEW YORK (AP) - What do you do when you tell your friends you can't have dinner with them because you have to watch "A Very Brady Christmas," and they are thrilled and come over with takeout blinis to watch it with you?

You sit down and watch "A Very Brady Christmas."

The holiday movie isn't on until Sunday, but we had a review tape from CBS. My friends were mightily impressed at getting to see "A Very Brady Christmas" before anybody else in America.

"Yep, it's the same living room," one friend remarked as the show began. She recalled the earth tones of the original Brady house and exactly where the furniture was. "Same kitchen," another friend noted. "The faucet's different. It's a washerless faucet."

I'm glad they noticed all this. I was never big on "The Brady Bunch" myself. I preferred "The Partridge Family."

My friends were just as quick to detect changes in the show's 25-year-old sensibility as they were to spot new upholstery on the dining room chairs.

"There's definitely more sex in this one," said one. "They never had sex in the old one. Just kids."

Interesting observation. Might make a trend story.

As the movie opened, we immediately learned that Christmas was coming, and Carol Brady (Florence Henderson) was planning to surprise Mike Brady (Robert Reed) with a trip to Greece. But Mike was going to surprise Carol with a trip to Japan. What a knee-slapper! This had all the makings of an extremely Brady Christmas, indeed.

What do the Bradys do? Flip a coin? Arm-wrestle? No way. They use the money to send plane tickets to all the kids so Christmas can be even Bradier.

There are also subplots. One is a "Towering Inferno" kind of thing. In another, Alice the maid (Ann B. Davis) is distraught because her husband, Sam the butcher, has left her for a younger woman.

But we didn't especially care, because our real goal in watching "A Very Brady Christmas" was at hand: what do the kids look like as adults?

Greg, the oldest boy, is a doctor. He has a moustache and is balding.

Peter, the middle one, has turned into a yuppie.

Bobby, the youngest one, is blond and races cars.

"I remember when he and his sister tried to break the world's record by going up and down on that thing in the backyard," said one of my friends, awash in sentiment. "What's

that thing that goes up and down?"

A teeter-totter?

"Yeah, the teeter-totter."

Yeesh. These reunion movies really raise the conversation level.

Anyway, on to the girls.

Marcia, the oldest one, looks pretty much the same.

Jan, the middle one, looks pretty much the same.

Cindy, the little one, looks remarkably the same considering she's played by a different actress.

Well, it turns out that every one of The Brady Bunch had A Very Secret Reason for not wanting to come to A Very Brady Christmas.

Greg's wife had gone off to see her family instead. Jan's husband had moved out of the house. Marcia's husband has lost his job. Cindy was tired of being treated like a baby. Peter didn't want the family to know he was afraid of marrying his girlfriend because she's his boss. Bobby had dropped out of graduate school.

Detecting a philosophical facet of the script lost on me, one of my friends noted, "This is definitely what Christmas reunions are about - deception."

OK, we were Bradied out. We had seen the kids, and we had figured out all the subplots. All that was left was for Sam the butcher to show up.

"I can see it a mile away," snorted

one of my friends. "They'll all decide it's best to be honest."

In the end, they all decided it was best to be honest. And Sam the Butcher showed up.

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