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Foley's move into Robson Arms adds to show's weirdness factor

February 26th, 2008

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DAVE Foley is no longer a kid. And as far as Robson Arms is concerned, he most certainly isn't in the hall.

Instead, the veteran Canadian comic actor is taking up residence in the fictional Vancouver apartment block's swankiest suite, joining the show's cast as Robson Arms' newly transplanted American owner.

Foley arrives this week during a special two-episode sneak preview of *Robson Arms*' third season that airs tonight and Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. on CTV. And if this early look at the comedy series' new campaign is any indication, the introduction of Yankified landlord Chuck Hoskins and his inappropriately affectionate wife, Trixie (Manitoban-born Allison Hossack), amounts to something in between a hands-across-the-border hug and an ugly-American invasion.

Tonight's episode opens with ever-so-nosy building super Yuri (John Cassini) listening in on the convenience store chatter about the new owner. Two things become immediately apparent: first, that the residents know more about the new owner than he does, and second, that the new owner has intentionally kept Yuri out of the loop by not inviting him to the get-acquainted barbecue scheduled for later that day.

Yuri, of course, simply invites himself to the "meat 'n' greet" mixer. Surprisingly, "Y'all"-drawling Chuck seems perfectly pleased to have him crash the party.

Chuck and Trixie are all handshakes, hugs, smiles and Polaroid snapshots at the meet-and-mingle event, but there's something about their overly familiar demeanour that suggests there's more to them than down-home neighbourliness. And Yuri soon finds out what that something else is, when Chuck summons him to their not-yet-furnished apartment and gives him orders for the first dirty job of the new ownership regime -- the eviction of a longtime tenant with whom Yuri shares something more than a passing friendship.

What it does, in addition to adding to the overburdened and undermotivated super's stress load, is inject another shade of weirdness into what has already proved itself to be one of the



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most appealingly odd collections of characters and relationships on the tube.

Over its first two seasons, *Robson Arms* has quietly established itself as one of the best-written shows on Canadian TV. Filled with a wacky, constantly rotating rabble of characters played by a stellar homegrown cast (which has included the likes of Mark McKinney, Leslie Nielsen, Gabrielle Miller, Fred Ewanuick, Joe Flaherty, Margot Kidder, Shirley Douglas and more), the series has kept its focus squarely on creating small, quirky and completely charming stories that resist the urge to lapse into standard sitcom silliness.

As such, *Robson Arms* is one of those sneaky-funny shows that prompts out-loud laughter at the most unexpected of moments. And that, of course, is more than half the fun.

Wednesday's episode focuses on newlywed *Star Wars* geeks Fred and Alicia (Haig Sutherland, Jane McGregor), whose blissful return to the Arms is disrupted when Fred's not-so-lovable-loser co-worker, Bark (*Mad TV*'s Will Sasso), takes advantage of his buddy's kindness and then starts hitting on his wife.

It's different. And funny. Which is why it's right at home at *Robson Arms*.

brad.oswald@freepress.mb.ca



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