

A REAL TOT SHOT

Gwen Stefani may own the stage, but it's her kids who really know how to steal the show. *Govani*, Page A14



NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009

nationalpost.com



Alison Reid, centre, with Megan Fahlenbock, left, and her daughter, Arwyn, and Angela Vint with her daughter, Maggie-Anne.

AARON LYNETT / NATIONAL POST

If you haven't seen it, and you probably haven't ...

Explaining the Canadian lag with U.S. shows

BY ALEX STRACHAN

What's happening with *Weeds*, a reader wanted to know. What's the deal with *The Closer*, another asked. What's up with *The Tudors*, yet another inquired.

Weeds is in the entertainment news right now because the new season, the show's fifth, premiered earlier this month on the U.S. pay-cable channel Showtime. Alanis Morissette will appear this season in a recurring role, and there have already been dramatic developments in *Weeds'* ongoing, serialized story.

The Closer premiered earlier this month as well, on the U.S. cable channel TNT. More than seven million viewers watched — more viewers, by far, than watched routine network fare like *I'm a Celebrity*, *Get Me Out of Here* and CTN import *The Listener* on NBC.

Have no fear. *Weeds* will air on Showcase, starting in the fall.

The Tudors — presumably — will return to CBC, also in the fall.

The Closer is an open question mark; the fourth season aired on the Edmonton-based pay-TV Super Channel, but there's no indication on the channel's website when, or even if, the fifth season will appear.

Canwest-owned Showcase is planning a major makeover in the fall, and *Weeds* will be a big part of the relaunch.

There's a problem, though — and it speaks to why Canadian broadcasters are forever behind the pop-cultural curve.

Summer is traditionally the time when the major U.S. specialty channels lay out their biggest, most expensive, highest-profile programs, as veteran entertainment-industry reporter Gary Levin pointed out in Tuesday's *USA Today*, in a story headlined "Summer brings a bumper crop of original cable dramas."

The reason is that the major U.S. networks — NBC, ABC, etc. — have posted a "Gone Fishing" sign for the summer, with throwaway fare like *Wipeout*, *I Survived a Japanese Game Show*, *The Bachelorette* and, yes, *The Listener*.

The U.S. cable networks understand they have the field more or less to themselves. They also understand there's little point in premiering *The Closer* in the fall, because that will put it in direct competition with the return of popular network dramas such as *House*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Desperate Housewives*.

Viewers here may be turning to the Canadian specialty channels in growing numbers, but the fall audience is constantly being split between cable fare and whatever the big networks are showing.

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BY BEN KAPLAN

Watching Angela Vint and Megan Fahlenbock play with their daughters at director Alison Reid's home in Toronto, the chemistry between all five ladies becomes immediately clear. The actresses shot *The Baby Formula* throughout their pregnancies and, now that they're promoting the movie, it makes sense for their children to be huddled in Reid's basement watching *Dora the Explorer* during interviews.

"The story was being written as our pregnancies developed," Fahlenbock says, as her 20-month-old daughter Arwyn hangs from her neck. "It's method acting, I guess."

The Baby Formula is a romantic comedy about a lesbian couple in which, thanks to medical advancements, both women become pregnant. Based on a short film Reid made with the actresses in 2006, karma immediately overcame the project when Reid was ready to turn it into a feature film.

"First, I found out Megan was pregnant, then I found out Alison was pregnant and it was just, 'My God! We have to take advantage of this!'" says Reid, 44, a stunt coordinator making her directorial debut. Reid has worked with Atom Egoyan and David Cronenberg and is in charge of stunts on the CBC series *Being Erica* and the new Kevin Spacey film *Casino Jack*, but nothing could have prepared her for directing two very pregnant leads.

"I was nine months pregnant when we were blocking the scene where my water breaks," Vint says. "I'm getting off this motorcycle and suddenly, my water really breaks! Kept me in the moment, definitely."

A labour of love for all involved parties — after Vint gave birth, she cast her daughter to play her child

A NINE MONTH SHOOT

New movie
The Baby
Formula was
a real labour
of love for all
involved

in the movie — the \$275,000 picture was shot sequentially over nine months with Reid calling in crew members on days off from coordinating stunts. The actresses say navigating their changing bodies was challenging, especially with a rookie director hungry to get every baby step filmed.

"It's so embarrassing, but I actually asked if we could turn the cameras on when Angela was going into labour," Reid says, with a laugh. "It was like, 'Really? Your water broke? Great!'"

"At that point," Vint says, "I had to tell her: 'Turn that microphone off!'"

While the film is a funny, tender portrayal of a lesbian couple, all parties involved say the story is about much more than gay rights.

"My father asked me if I was making a 'lesbian film' and I told him no more so than any other movie is a 'straight' one," Fahlenbock says. "The film is about two people starting the next chapter of their lives. It's a crazy time when you make that leap."

It was certainly a leap for the actresses to let themselves be filmed during their pregnancies. While making *The Baby Formula*, Fahlenbock was also shooting *MVP: The Secret Lives of Hockey Wives* and spent most of her screen-time beneath pillows. The opportunity to show what pregnant women actually look like — and have Reid film their bellies instead of covering them up — gave both actresses the strength to schlep themselves into work every day.

"Everything about this movie was tied into making it real," Vint says. "Well, making it funny, touching and poignant, but we always felt like we had nothing to hide."

■ *The Baby Formula* opens tomorrow at AMC Yonge and Dundas in Toronto. For more information, see thebabyformulamovie.com.

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ADVICE

YOU'RE SO VAIN

Steve Murray on what to do when you're just so awesome that others want to be you.

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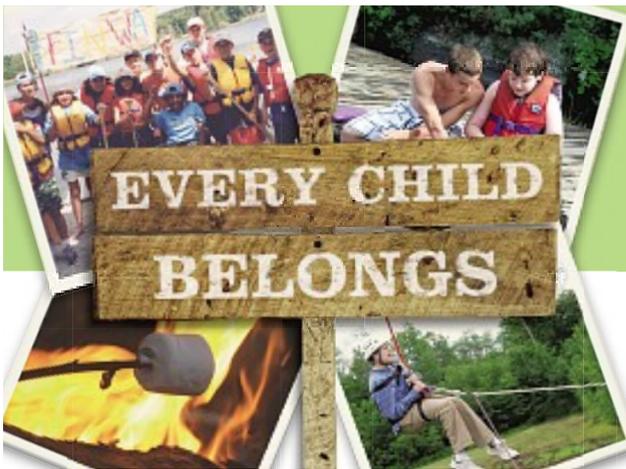
MUSIC

SAM SPIEGEL

He's worked with Tom Waits and Kanye West.

But he really goes geek for George Clinton.

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