



Experience more with **PHILIPS FLAT TV**  Buy any Philips Plasma Flat TV and get a portable DVD Player FREE. (\$170 value)

Available at  Buy select Philips Widescreen LCD TVs and get a vertical DVD Player FREE. (\$150 value) [SEE IT](#)

An AOL Television special **FALL TV**  [Search TV Listings](#) [Search](#)

The O.C.

NEXT ▶

The O.C.

Reviewed by Carina Chocano



ORANGE CRUSH "The O.C."s McKenzie, Barton, Brody, and Bilson sit pretty

In the new Fox drama **The O.C.**, Peter Gallagher plays Sandy Cohen, a pro bono public defender (his platter-eyed idealism kept aloft by his wife's fluffy piles of cash) who one day decides to bring his work home in the form of a real live wayward boy. Home is a palatial spread in the harbor-front community of Newport Beach, Calif., and the kid is Ryan Atwood (Benjamin McKenzie), who -- brooding hotness and impressive standardized-test scores notwithstanding -- is just the kind of element the gates of the community were designed to keep out. Ryan winds up in the Cohens' pool house with some fresh sheets, a new toothbrush, and sudden access to plenty of really high-end teen nihilism: hot-tub threesomes, mean girls with dumb hippie names, and rich pricks who jump you and say things like "Welcome to the O.C., bitch. This is how it's done in Orange County."

Since the fight takes place outside a fancy beach house after a charity fashion show, you get the sense he means it's done a lot like it's done where Ryan comes from, only with much more money. Like "Beverly Hills 90210"'s Brandon and Brenda before him, Ryan gets tossed into a shark pond of privilege overnight. Unlike the Walsh twins, however, he lacks parents so rich in family values you want to hose them down and slap them back to Minnesota. But that's about as far as the comparison stretches. "The O.C." is refreshingly free of both Spelling-style camp and the twee earnestness that has characterized more recent teen dramas. The kids of "The O.C." not only do not live in a parentless universe -- they are kids who suffer for living in a heavily parented one.

Sandy's wife, Kirsten (Kelly Rowan), is less than thrilled with her husband's gesture, as their

« All About

▶ **The O.C.**

- ▶ Get Updates
- ▶ Email to a Friend

GRADE
EW Grade: B+

LEAD PERFORMANCE

- ▶ Peter Gallagher
- ▶ Mischa Barton
- ▶ Kelly Rowan
- ▶ Adam Brody
- ▶ Benjamin McKenzie

SUPPORTING PERFORMANCE

- ▶ Tate Donovan
- ▶ Rachel Bilson

PRODUCER

- ▶ Doug Liman
- ▶ McG

DISTRIBUTOR | BROADCAST

- ▶ Fox

START DATE

- ▶ Aug 5 2003

MORE ON AOL TELEVISION

Find out what's on and see features from TV's big shows

Watch video previews of TV's hottest upcoming shows



What about Bob? Get the latest dish on 'The Bachelor'

Advertisement

Which new and returning shows will you watch this fall? Post thoughts and talk with fans.



FEATURE
Our 10 Must-See Shows
Romeo and Juliet in the porn biz, a tough chick inspired by J. Lo, and eight more fall series we can't wait to watch



CLICK HERE
to get 2
FREE TRIAL
ISSUES of
Entertainment

Newport Beach neighbors are when they learn of Ryan's provenance: namely, Chino, Calif., or as a rich girl named Summer (Rachel Bilson) puts it, "Chino, ew." So, Ryan skulks around his new neighborhood with one eyebrow raised, immediately hip to the irony of it all. When he and ritzy next-door neighbor Marissa (Mischa Barton) bond, it's over their parents' similar ineptitudes, Prada and trailers aside. McKenzie has a gift for suffering, smoldering, and raging in silence, and it serves him well in a role that's almost entirely about containment and ambivalence. When Marissa first asks him who he is, he responds with the classic television-hooker answer: "Whoever you want me to be."

The Cohens' son, Seth (Adam Brody), meanwhile, is a nuanced portrait of a true-to-life dork, the odd product of the tension between his parents' ideology and their tax bracket. His relationship to Ryan is full of nice little ironies. When they first meet, Seth suggests they play Grand Theft Auto; then, realizing that Ryan is staying at his house because he actually stole a car, Seth backpedals madly. "Not that that's cool -- or uncool -- I don't know." You get the feeling that he's given up trying to figure it out.

Somewhere in all the high-stakes soapiness (in the first three episodes alone, people borrow large sums, gamble large sums, and set a fire) and often deft and subtle drama, there is a pretty wicked satire of baby-boomer values. Gallagher, in particular, is sublime as the Bronx-raised, Beamer-driving fairy godfather whose moral compass is stuck on do-gooder even when he is headed in the opposite direction. After Kirsten orders Sandy to remove the young felon from their household, he reminds her that she once pledged never to become like her parents (who are largely responsible for their dreamy lifestyle). She replies wearily, "I was 22. I stank of patchouli and lived in the back of a mail truck," and he chirps back, "And you were fun!" (Clearly, in other ways, she still is, since he promptly loads the boy into the BMW and takes him back to Chino -- temporarily, of course.)

Though her feet are on more solid -- or at least more realistic -- ground, Kirsten is not above a little hand-wringing herself, as evidenced by the wry smile she offers when asked by Marissa's father, the Enron-ish financial planner Jimmy (Tate Donovan), "Did you ever think this would be our lives?" Jimmy has an inflatable wife and an alcoholic daughter, and he's turned to a life of white-collar crime, presumably to keep his family in \$3,000 handbags.

While Jimmy squirms, Sandy has his cake, eats it, and tells everybody how to bake one, too. Given that the show's creator, Josh Schwartz, and exec producers Doug Liman and McG hover in age somewhere between "The O.C."s teens and their parents, it's no surprise their response to the



classic boomer dilemma seems simple: Just shut up already.

(Posted:08/12/03)

NEXT ▶

All About The O.C. ▶

▶ TRY 2 ISSUES FREE OF ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY!



[Privacy Policy](#) | Copyright © 2003 Entertainment Weekly and Time Inc. All rights reserved.

Image Credits | The O.C.: Robert Seabree