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Television Review

These Kids Don't Fight, They Just Use Mail Order

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**THE LAST KING
OF SCOTLAND**

By SUSAN STEWART

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"The Replacements" doesn't look like a fairy tale, but it works like one. In this clever, hopeful new animated series from the Disney Channel, brother and sister orphans happen upon a comic book with an ad that changes their lives. For \$1.98, they can order (a) parents and (b) replacements for anybody who limits, frightens or irritates them. This is both an ode to the transforming power of the imagination and a serious salute to catalog shopping. Either way, the moral is the same: at the end of every 11-minute story, Riley and Todd discover that life was better before their new, improved purchases screwed it up.

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Disney Channel

The family from the new cartoon show "The Replacements."

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Their parents — evidently ordered between the show's introduction and the first episode — are a stuntman named Dick Daring and a British spy known as Agent K: exotic versions of the usual clueless, embarrassing dads and moms who tend to inhabit cartoons and fairy tales. They're fixtures, not factors: funny walk-ons who barely figure into the plots.

In "CindeRiley," the best tale among the early episodes, tomboy Riley needs a haircut before a school dance. Dad is happy to take her to see "One-Cut Wally," but Riley wants more. So she orders a replacement hair stylist. Before you can say "You're fired!" Wally is whisked off in a military helicopter to give buzz-cuts to new recruits, and in his place arrives a mincing fop who owes a lot to [Martin Short](#) in "Father of the Bride."

Dad gets a dye job that improves his Evel Knievel look so much that his wife doesn't recognize him. Riley gets a makeover so intense that the stylist wears a surgical mask to administer it. At the school dance, there's a bloodless "Carrie" scene, followed by a moment of realization as Riley sees that a cute boy actually likes her better when she's wearing her baseball uniform.

"I'd much rather dance with you," he says, "than with some pretty girl."

Riley: "Um ... thank you?"

If real life were this neat and tidy, we wouldn't need cartoons, or fairy tales, to help us understand it.

Aimed at pre-teenagers, "The Replacements" packs enough visual jokes to entertain tolerant adults. At the hair salon, there's a delicious moment when a plump matron's lap dog licks her — and she licks him back. In an episode focused on Todd and his obsession with skateboarding, Todd's stuntman dad jumps the shark — literally. It's a cliché, but that doesn't mean you won't laugh.

Todd is played by Nancy Cartwright, the voice of Bart Simpson. This makes for some déjà vu moments, as when Todd asks the rhetorical question, "In my effort to protect myself, have I become the very thing I sought to destroy?" Half-man and half-nerd, he sounds just like Bart, and that's not bad.

THE REPLACEMENTS

Disney, tonight at 9, Eastern and Pacific times; 8, Central time.

Directed by Heather Martinez; created by Dan Santat; Jack Thomas, executive producer. Produced by Walt Disney Television Animation.

WITH THE VOICES OF: Nancy Cartwright (Todd), Grey Delisle (Riley), Kath Soucie (Agent K), Daran Norris (Dick Daring) and David McCallum (CAR).

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