

## 12 Fantastic TV Characters Whose Portrayers Did Not Receive an Emmy Nomination (Part Two)

by Joe Mulder

(Part Two: The Women)

As I said in Part One:

This list is by no means comprehensive; it is not a list of the all-time top 12 TV characters whose portrayers were not nominated for Emmys, nor is it a list of the all-time top 12 Emmy nomination snubs. It is simply a list of 12 fantastic TV characters whose portrayers did not receive an Emmy nomination for playing said fantastic TV character; these are the first 12 such TV characters that a) came to my mind, and b) stacked up favorably against the actors in the categories in which they would (and *should*) have been nominated. Also, I have provided you with an Emmy nomination that my choice could probably have replaced without the Earth spinning off its axis.

Oh, and most of these will be from the last ten or fifteen years, mainly because I don't know from old TV shows.

Here we go...

### **Beth Hufstodt, "Huff"** (played by Padget Brewster)

We all remember Padget Brewster as Kathy, the woman who came between Joey and Chandler on "Friends" in a story arc that memorably led to Chandler spending Thanksgiving in a box.

But as we happy few who watched "Huff" during its all-too-brief run on "Showtime" can attest, she did the best work of her career as the L.A. wife, mother and daughter-in-law dealing with the rich white people problems that, to her, were just as big as any problems that anybody else might have.

Please allow a quick detour that will, I promise, lead us back to where we intend to go: those who don't follow the NFL closely or are under 20 might not remember this, but the New England Patriots used to be one of football's worst teams. During the nadir of their existence, a 1992 season in which the team would post a record of 2-14 just two seasons after finishing 1-15, "Sports Illustrated" ran an article about their struggles. In the story, Pats quarterback Hugh Millen said something that has stayed with me for all these years. Sure one could focus on how well one has it relative to other people, he pointed out, but that's not human nature. We just don't to that. For whatever reason, we generally focus on how well we're doing as it relates to how well we *could* be doing. That's why, in the midst of an historically bad season, a rich NFL quarterback, living out every little boy's dream,

felt so miserable.

I don't remember Millen's actual quotation at all, but that was my interpretation of the jist of it, and that part of the human condition is what seemed to inform Padget Brewster's performance as Beth. The character has a gorgeous house in a tony L.A. neighborhood, a rich, handsome, successful psychiatrist husband, a gifted son, and the time and resources to pursue whatever passions she chooses, which in her case involves running her own catering business. Much like that of a rich, famous NFL quarterback, her life *should* be nothing but non-stop joy and happiness (or so she probably imagines). But her husband is drawing away from her, her meddling mother-in-law is always coming over, her son is a teenager ('nuff said), and an obsessed, psychotic female patient of her husband's breaks into the family house and tries to kill her with a knife (which, to be fair to Beth, would be a pretty major problem for anybody, rich or not).

And, since she knows that she has a life to which many, many women aspire, there must be a nice, juicy layer of guilt on top of her misery, guilt for being miserable at all in such circumstances. Yet on she goes, a good wife and a good mother through all of it.

The three other principles on "Huff" (Hank Azaria, Oliver Platt and Blythe Danner) were rewarded with Emmy nominations; Padget Brewster should have been as well.

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of: Tyne Daly, "Judging Amy" (2005)*

[that was Tyne Daly's 16th Emmy nomination; by that point, having to get dressed up and sit through another languid, three-plus-hour ceremony was probably more of an annoyance than an honor for her]

### **Lindsay Fünke, "Arrested Development"** (played by Portia de Rossi)

"Arrested Development" was one of the best TV shows ever. Anyone who ever appeared on it without being nominated – up to and including background extras – could have appeared on this list, but Portia de Rossi was an easy choice, being the most prominent cast member who didn't receive an Emmy nod.

There was certainly no place for vanity in the cast of "Arrested Development," and de Rossi leaned that front shoulder out over the plate and right smack dab into every indignation the writers threw at her – talking in a deep, raspy voice that led her daughter to tell a classmate that she was really a man, wearing a leather mini-skirt and a tight sleeveless shirt with "SLUT" bedazzled across the front while visiting her father in prison, showing up scratched, scraped and haggard just in time to be bid on at a charity auction, etc.

I won't say she did a better job than the rest of the "Arrested Development" cast, but she certainly didn't do any worse. Almost all of them were recognized with an Emmy nomination; she should have been too.

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of:* Conchata Ferrell, "Two and a Half Men (2005)

**Veronica Mars, "Veronica Mars"** (played by Kristen Bell)

"Veronica Mars" was one of the best shows on TV during its lamentably brief three season run – if you don't believe me, just ask any entertainment critic or serious television aficionado – and as the titular student-slash-private investigator, Kristen Bell carried the show on her tiny, adorable shoulders. Yes, Veronica was preternaturally self-possessed for her age, but by the time the show hit the airwaves we'd seen enough teenagers of that stripe on TV and in the movies that we were willing to go with it. Veronica was fierce, but at times she could be as vulnerable as any teenage girl. Kristen Bell played it all to perfection.

And her character's obvious obsession with *The Big Lebowski*, which was clearly a manifestation of the "Veronica Mars" writing staff's obvious obsession with *The Big Lebowski*, didn't hurt either.

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of:* Geena Davis, "Commander in Chief" (2006)

[by the way, I just now decided that "Commander in Chief" would have been infinitely more entertaining and successful if Geena Davis's character had been referred to exclusively as "the she-president"... "Sources close to the administration say that the she-president's State of the Union address will focus mainly on economic issues." "Are you crazy? I'm not going to bother the she-president with something like that today!" "Admiral, do not forget that you're talking to the she-president of the United States." And so on]

**Buffy Summers, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"** (played by Sarah Michelle Gellar)

I only started watching reruns of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" the summer after the show's debut because there wasn't much else on, and "Entertainment Weekly" kept saying how good it was. And, by that point, you didn't mess with what "Entertainment Weekly" said was good. They went on a run of championing shows that not enough people were watching – "Buffy," "NewsRadio," "Everybody Loves Raymond" (later a huge hit, but ranked 82nd in the ratings its first year) – that was really, really impressive.

And despite the fact that "Buffy" turned out to be one of the best shows in the history of television – a fact acknowledged by the likes of "TV Guide," "Time" and the aforementioned "EW" – it received scant attention from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, a lone Outstanding Writing for

a Drama Series nomination for "Buffy" creator Joss Whedon being the show's only recognition in any major Emmy category over the course of its seven year run.

Nonetheless, between "Buffy," "Angel," "Firefly," "Serenity" and "Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog," Joss Whedon has so perfected a particular balance between self-referentially silly and deadly serious that it sets his projects apart as their own superior brand, and I'm not sure any of that would have come to fruition if not for Sarah Michelle Gellar. She could play the fool in episodes like "Halloween" or "Life Serial" and she could carry heartbreaking story arcs such as the consummation, and subsequent deterioration, of Buffy's relationship with Angel in Season 2, displaying – hell, maybe even inventing – the rare skill necessary to navigate both poles of the Joss Whedon sensibility. Truth be told, she's not my all-time favorite; but she was indispensable as Buffy Summers.

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of:* Jane Seymour, "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman" (1998)

**Willow Rosenberg, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"** (played by Alyson Hannigan)

As Buffy, Sarah Michelle Gellar was every bit as good as I just got done saying she was. Alyson Hannigan, as Willow, was better.

Seeing her play Willow for laughs, a Buckingham Palace guard would have guffawed uncontrollably. Seeing her play Willow heartbroken, the 1975 Philadelphia Flyers would have been reduced to blubbing, sobbing heaps.

Go and watch just "Doppelgangland," from Season 3, and "Conversations With Dead People," from Season 7, and try to tell me that Alyson Hannigan's portrayal of Willow Rosenberg doesn't rank as one of the absolute best performances by any actor as any character in TV in the last 25 years, up there with Danson, Gandolfini and David Hyde Pierce. You won't be able to.

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of:* Mary-Louise Parker, "The West Wing" (2002)

[I don't think I ever missed an episode of "The West Wing," and as I was looking through the Best Supporting Actress in a Drama nominees of the late '90s and early '00s, I came across this one and thought to myself, "What? Mary-Louise Parker was on 'The West Wing'? Oh, yeah; I guess she was." Nothing against MLP, but these would have been the Emmys that would have recognized Alyson Hannigan's work in Season 6, when, among other things, we got to see Evil Willow. That *really* should have happened]

**Monica Geller, "Friends"** (played by Courtney Cox)

First of all, yes, I double-checked; Sarah Michelle Gellar

## POOP READING

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spells it one way, Monica Geller spells it another.

Courtney Cox did fine work as Monica, and her character got much funnier and more interesting as the years went on ("Fat Monica" rarely, if ever, disappointed). How did it come to pass, then, that she was the only "Friends" cast member never to be nominated for an Emmy?

Certainly her work in "The One with the Embryos," in which Monica and Rachel bet their apartment in a trivia game against Joey and Chandler, or in "The One with the Routine," in which Monica and Ross audition as dancers for Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve, should have been more than adequate to get some Emmy love. Unluckily for Courtney Cox, her best years on "Friends" came during the era of Emmy darlings "Sex and the City," "Everybody Loves Raymond" and "Will & Grace," and there were only so many nominations to go around.

Couldn't we have spared a nomination for her earlier in the "Friends" run, though? Back when the "Friends" cast members were competing in the Supporting categories? I think so...

*Could very well have been nominated for an Emmy instead of: Liz Torres, "The John Laroquette Show" (1995)*

And with that, we're done. To paraphrase "Sports Night" (which, now that I think of it, renders both Part One and Part Two of this list completely invalid, since none of the "Sports Night" actors or actresses were nominated for Emmys and they all probably should have been, but oh well), if you've had half as much fun reading this list as I had writing it, then I had twice as much fun writing it as you did reading it. Bye now.

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