

On the 'Money'

ABC's smart new series *Dirty Sexy Money* is simply loaded with fun, soapy drama.

BY GILLIAN FLYNN

Dirty Sexy Money

Wednesdays,
10 p.m.
ABC

Dirty Sexy Money is, at its best, a drawing-room farce writ marvelously large: Manhattan-style, Kennedy-style large. Stylized, soapy, silly, it's one of the most interesting new

shows this fall. The ABC drama isn't attempting anything unique—no characters break into show tunes, no children are bused into a ghost town—but it displays a moody, inventive braininess that belies all its girl fights, boy fights, and tipling women in platter-size hats.

Created by Craig Wright (*Brothers & Sisters*), *DSM* is the story of idealistic Nick George (*Six Feet Under*'s Peter Krause), who reluctantly follows in his dad's footsteps: He's now the family lawyer for the billionaire Darling clan, headed by chummy Tripp (Donald Sutherland, having a grand old time) and his dissatisfied wife, Letitia (Jill Clayburgh, lending depth to the usual boozy matriarch role). To complicate matters, Nick's dad just died in a mysterious plane crash, and he's feeling both suspicious and nostalgic. Krause plays

Nick with the perfect blend of affection, annoyance, and righteousness. With just a look, he conjures up each Darling's role in his childhood: He's spiteful and squinty with his old nemesis Brian (*Six Feet Under*'s Glenn Fitzgerald); patiently pedantic with club-hopping twins Jeremy (*Nip/Tuck*'s Seth Gabel) and Juliet (*The O.C.*'s

Samaire Armstrong); and gentle with his ditzzy childhood sweetheart, Karen (*Eyes*' Natalie Zea).

It's good Nick is grounded, since the Darlings are as loopy and spectacular as the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Take politician Patrick (William Baldwin), who is running for the Senate while keeping a transsexual mistress (Candis Cayne). Transsexuals are this season's "wacky next-door neighbor," but here the role is nicely underplayed by Cayne and believably written as a plotline rather than a punchline (the same can't be said for fellow ABC drama *Big Shots*). *DSM*'s ensemble is a delight—especially Zea, who, as socialite Karen, manages to be adorable yet synapse-free, her thoughts bobbing along for anyone to enjoy. It's no simple feat for the actors to pull off the show's intentionally theatrical dialogue: The whole Darling family seems to have developed their personalities by watching other personalities on TV.

For the most part, *DSM* crackles along—with the exception of awkward pit-stop scenes involving Nick's home life. (His chipper wife, played by *JAG*'s Zoe McLellan, is notably absent from the third episode.) Ditto for the mystery of his dad's death. (*L.A. Law*'s Blair Underwood will soon appear as a billionaire suspect. Meh.) Ironically, these weightier story lines feel like distractions. The family, with all its glitz and scandal, is more than enough entertainment. The Darlings themselves would agree: It should be all about them. **B+**



