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## Disney's *Lizzie McGuire* a guilty pleasure

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I would be embarrassed to admit that I occasionally tune into the Disney Channel on weekends to watch shows that are obviously meant for 12-year-old girls, except that I know that there are a freakish number of people like me who are also watching Disney's "tween" shows like *Even Stevens* and, especially, *Lizzie McGuire*.

What exactly is the attraction to badly-written shows about the stereotypical "average American girl" and the trials and tribulations of her junior high life? Having already passed that painful stage in my own life, why would I want to relive an obviously fake and glorified version of it? Well, because it is obviously fake and glorified.

*Lizzie McGuire* draws in viewers with the oldest strategy in the book—show them what they wish they could be. Lizzie (Hilary Duff) is cute (but not in anything but a cheerful, innocuous way); her family is quirky (but not so much so that they transgress into weird territory);

and her friends are sweet (but not cloyingly so). Sure, it's a little bit reminiscent of the Olsen twins, but with that much less fake sophistication.



Hilary Duff stars as Lizzie McGuire. Photo courtesy of google.com

Okay, so everyone outside of the realm of her immediate family and her best friends, Gordo (Adam Lamberg) and Miranda (Lalaine Vergara-Paras), is a completely underdeveloped and stereotypical character, from the snotty arch-nemesis, Kate (Ashlie Brillaut), to the awkward nerd, Larry (Kyle Downes). The plot lines are typical of family-friendly coming-of-age shows as well—one episode is about a fight between Lizzie and her best

friends that is resolved when they all realize how important they are to each other. Another is about Gordo's unrequited crush on Lizzie and his eventual courage to kiss her. Awww.

But one can't help rooting for the underdogs. Lizzie and her friends are not "popular," but they are cool in ways that we all wish we could have been in junior high. Miranda wears clothes that, while not likely to ever be found in the wardrobe of any pre-teen except one with extremely generous or wealthy parents, are definitely unique without being ridiculous. Gordo is a nerd who stands behind his convictions and seems not to mind the criticism he receives

for it. Lizzie herself has her awkward moments, but her wry recognition of them saves her from coming off as a vacant blonde. You have to hand it to them—at least they don't pretend to be what they're not.

Yes, *Lizzie McGuire* is cliché, but the cliché is sometimes sweet and charming enough to bear—or even to enjoy—watching. Obviously, someone is watching, because *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* is coming out this May.