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# It's a good year to be best friends with Bonnie Hunt

By MICHAEL GILTZ

EVERYBODY in Hollywood loves Bonnie Hunt — and finally regular viewers are starting to agree.

Her new sitcom — “**Life With Bonnie**,” which airs Tuesday nights on ABC — might become the first show she’s starred in that makes it to a second season.

“I’ve got my fingers crossed,” says Hunt. “It’s not only for me. It affects all my friends’ lives and everybody I work with on the show.”

Hunt isn’t kidding about it affecting her friends.

The Chicago-based comic surrounds herself with a core group of creative people — most prominently, her writing partner Don Lake — that

she is incredibly loyal to.

In fact, Hunt once rejected a CBS offer to extend an earlier sitcom, “**The Building**,” if she would dump some of the cast members.

Of course, there’s loyalty and then there’s loyalty.

Now that the show has proven itself, Hunt dismissed most of her writing staff this week — writers that the network saddled her with.

Playing fast and loose is part of Hunt’s appeal on “Bonnie.” As the host of a local Chicago morning show, Hunt will have on real guests — such as an outdoorsman showing her how to put up a tent or chefs teaching her a new dish.

The scenes are all improvised and shot in real time, just as if they were

going out on the air live, giving Hunt a chance to display her quick-wit.

“We’re going to have actors coming on who are promoting films that are fake and then we’re going to have fake movie clips,” says Hunt.

One likely candidate: old buddy George Clooney.

She is — remarkably — the first woman to write, direct and star in her own sitcom in television history. “**The Building**” in 1993.

Now, finally, Hunt may be able to change “sitcom” to “hit show.” And she’s done it on her own — with a little help from her friends.

“Lucy had Desi. Carol Burnett had her husband. And I’m just sleeping around,” says Hunt.