

# Sick humor

## Flu bug delays new season of 'Chappelle Show,' DVD release

Dave Chappelle is getting a late start on season three of his show.

### EXCLUSIVE

By MICHAEL GILTZ *12/2/04*

**T**HE new season of "Chappelle's Show" — the hottest sketch comedy series on television and a record-setting bestseller on DVD — has been pushed back months from Feb. 16 to late April or May.

Illness and a "Sopranos"-like display of artistic control are to blame, officials say. Dave Chappelle is under the weather with the flu and borderline walking pneumonia, according to Tony Fox, the executive vice president of corporate communications at Comedy Central.

As well, Chappelle is not sticking to a predictable timetable for delivering new episodes of the show, famous for parodying Rick James ("I'm Rick James, b—!") and exploring issues of race and class with scathing humor.

"Dave— and his entire production crew for that matter — got a bit of a late start on writing season three," says Fox.

"We're behind on the writing. He was recently sick for more than a week. There had been a built-in hiatus in the production schedule for the holidays.

"We had about 10 days of production left, so we pushed that through the end of the holiday break to give him some time to recover and get some writing time in. We'll resume production in January, so we're not exactly sure what that means in terms of launch date."

The first season debuted in

January of 2003 and quickly became the cable channel's hottest property alongside "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" and "South Park."

Season two debuted in January of this year and turned into a genuine phenomenon.

It regularly drew more than 3 million viewers, and the DVD set of season one came out a month later, quickly becoming the top-selling TV show on DVD of all time (though "Seinfeld" is expected to surpass it this season).

Chappelle toyed with ending the show on a high note.

But he eventually re-signed with Comedy Central in a precedent-setting deal that paid him to continue as star, executive producer and writer of the series and gave him a piece of the DVD profits (something even movie stars don't typically get).

The two-year deal for 26 shows could be worth some \$50 million, depending on sales.

The DVD set of season two has also been delayed to tie-in with the TV launch of season three.

"We're still talking to Dave and his team, seeing where we are in the writing," says Fox. "Bottom line: We're behind. If I had to guess, I'd say April or May at the earliest. No later than May."

Along with the show, Chappelle has been working on other projects, including a feature film along the lines of 1973's "Wattstax," which featured legendary stand-up by Richard Pryor.

The untitled film — di-

rected by Michel Gondry of "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" — combines Chappelle's sketch comedy with a Brooklyn "block party" concert filmed in September and featuring musical guests like Mos Def (a frequent guest on the show), Kanye West, Common, Erykah Badu and a reunited Fugees.

There is no release date for the film.

Chappelle's \$500,000 book deal with Disney-owned Hyperion also appears to be in flux.

