

● REALLY BIG SHOW

Wanda at Large

Getting Syked over her new sitcom

By MICHAEL GILTZ

COMEDIAN Wanda Sykes is everywhere.

She does hilarious taped bits for "Inside the NFL," appears regularly on HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," pops up on Comedy Central's "Premium Blend" sketch show and does voices on "Crank Yankers."

But Sykes takes omnipresence to a new level on Wednesday when her new sitcom "Wanda at Large" debuts on Fox at 9:30 p.m. following a special, one-hour edition of "American Idol."

"I'm selling my sweet ass all over the place the night the show premieres," laughs Sykes, who has numerous appearances scheduled that day.

"I've got 'The View,' 'Good Day New York,' and Colin Quinn's show ['Tough Crowd' on Comedy Central at 11:30 p.m.]."

The only place you won't be seeing the 39-year-old actress that day is at the center of a big get-together for all of her friends in New York, where Sykes has an apartment.

"I don't want a big party because that's only one TV," says Sykes. "I need as many people at home watching the TV as possible. I'll call them up and say, 'You're watching right?'"

One of the funniest comics around, Sykes comes to TV with a sitcom that presents her as a roving reporter for a local DC station (where she grew up), and as a sarcastic counterpoint to the liberal and conservative talking heads on a Sunday talk show.

Sykes lets loose on all sorts of topics ("Put your money in weed; the price of weed never goes down.") and taping bits akin to her work on "Inside the NFL."

On one of them, Sykes says some golf clubs don't want women to play, but when she goes with a good friend — who just happens to be a nude model — the goggle-eyed men always let them play through and never complain.

Sykes is excited about the possibilities of the show — which has a six-episode run — but admits she can breathe easier knowing she has so many other shows offering work.

"This means a lot to me and I worked hard," says Sykes.

"But yeah, there is that security in the back of my mind that if this doesn't work out, hey, I've already booked club dates."

Sykes didn't grow up dreaming of her own sitcom or even doing stand-up. She was trapped in a dull job at the National Security Agency — "I was bored silly," she admits — until a radio station announced a talent search.

She'd never delivered a joke on stage in her life, but Sykes sat down the next day at work, wrote a five-minute routine. She ended up winning second place and having a new goal in life.



D.C. native Wanda Sykes lets loose for her new sitcom on FOX Wednesday nights.

"I loved it. Look at me!" says Sykes.

"It took about five years. I started in '87 and I left my job in '92. That was the point where I could go on the road and still eat."

And what did her family say about giving up a steady job for comedy?

"They thought I'd lost my damn mind. My father was like, 'What was that college for? I specifically remember writing

checks to a school or something. Now, what was that for? What was that for?'"

"My mom, she just thought I was nuts. Now they're like, 'Oh, I don't know why you didn't start earlier. What took you so long? You were wasting your time. You should have been a theater major.'"

WANDA AT LARGE
Wednesday, 9:30 p.m., FOX