Laverne and Shirley Encyclopedia Article

Laverne and Shirley

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Laverne and Shirley

Premiering on ABC in January of 1976, *Laverne and Shirley* captured 47 percent of the television viewing audience, becoming an instant hit. In its first season, the sitcom—set in 1950s Milwaukee—ranked second only to *Happy Days,* the show from which *Laverne and Shirley* was spun-off. The program's success can be attributed to the appeal of its title characters, Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeney—played by Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams—who were single women employed as bottlecappers at the "Shotz Brewery." They lacked college degrees or promising careers, and lived in a modest basement apartment, which made them blue-collar when working class comedies like *All in the Family* reigned and women were entering the work force in record numbers. In addition, their slapstick comedy recalled *I Love Lucy*, a favorite of the 1950s. Unlike Lucy and Ethel, however, Laverne and Shirley did not have husbands. They were, as their theme song asserted, doing it their way.

Further Reading:

Brooks, Tim, editor, and Earle Marsh, contributor. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows 1946-Present.* New York, Ballantine Books, 1995.

McNeil, Alex. *Total Television: The Comprehensive Guide to Programming from 1948 to the Present.* New York, Penguin USA, 1997.