

REVIEW

The 'Secret' is (wink, wink!) out

I'VE GOT A SECRET. Cool update of the guessing game where mystery guests with odd talents / eccentricities try to stump a panel of celebrity wits. Weeknight treat premieres tonight at 11:30 on GSN.

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Been yearning to see a man snap pencils with his butt cheeks? Or kick himself in the head 40 times a minute?

I didn't know I was, either. But apparently, yes, this was a need that had to be satisfied.

And these stunts are just part of the thrills to TV's latest unexpected treat. As with many destinations, the getting-there proves just as enjoyable as arriving.

"I've Got a Secret" returns tonight on GSN in an irreverent new guise, all pop culture crazed, sex obsessed and gay as all get-out. It's fabulous in every sense of the word.

The game's the same as it has been since the Goodson-Todman hit of the 1950s, whose black-and-white wit still delights daily on GSN at the TiVo time of 3 a.m. Updating the original panel of New York sophisticates in evening wear — Bill Cullen, Henry Morgan, Bess Myerson, Betsy Palmer — the raconteurial quartet trying to guess a contestant's secret now consists of trendy smarties in animal print, fuschia and shaved heads.

Their questions are fresher, too, in every sense of that word. The classic "Is it bigger than a breadbox?" has given way to "Is it sexual in nature? I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope."



GAME SHOW NETWORK PHOTOS

Host Bil Dwyer, above left, with panelists and with guest Corbin Bernsen, at left, on the revived "I've Got a Secret" on GSN.



That one comes from former Newsday columnist Frank DeCaro, more lately of "The Daily Show's" Out at the Movies and Sirius Radio's OutQ channel.

DeCaro's the giddy bald one in the fuschia jacket, with the polka dot tie, who's bursting with such info-gathering nosiness as "Do you put this plastic item in a naughty place?"

Relax, people. The "secret" he's trying to guess is a woman keeping 82 hula hoops in circular motion. And DeCaro's not alone. His friends-in-wicked-wit include Broadway's Jermaine Taylor ("Are you bending over?" he wonders re the use of said plastic item), comic Suzanne Westenhoefer ("Do you bend over?" she asks tomorrow night's head-kicker) and "out" ex-baseballer Billy Bean. Perhaps Billy is the panel's voice of reason. He isn't quite so playfully depraved. "With your clothing on, can people see it?" he asks tonight's celebrity guest, Adam "Batman" West, after learning from host Bil Dwyer that "Adam has altered his body in a unique way."

Woo-hoo! But no: Adam's secret is merely a Batman symbol on a crowned tooth. "I've Got a Secret" is a tease. But

like Gypsy Rose Lee — precisely the type of name-check likely to pop out on this program — it's a delectable one. Dwyer amiably reins in his wild-child panelists with his own relaxed sense of humor, so the mood remains nimble. While there's the occasional "normal" contestant — tomorrow's identical twins married to identical twins — most of them are decidedly dishy, too.

Tomorrow night's lizard trainer has his vogue-ing reptiles sit propped akimbo on tiny chaises like cold-blooded Madonnas. (Redundant?) They — the human secret-keepers, that is — are as up for a jest as the panel.

Camp icon West explains how he used his favorite Bat-crime fighting tool: "I just whipped it out."

He means his Bat Shield. What did you think?