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Put the Kids in Bed and Close the Door, the Real Bob Saget Is in the House

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LOS ANGELES -- A most unusual case, this [Bob Saget](#). We were just reviewing the file, a very thick file. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, it appears that patient Saget is suffering from PFTSD (Post Family-TV Stress Disorder).

"I'm seriously messed up," Saget says. "Whatever I have, I obviously have it bad."

By his own admission, Saget is fixated on a fictional character he once portrayed on the beloved [ABC sitcom](#) "Full House" (1987-1995). It's the Saget alter ego, Danny Tanner, the wholesome father figure of three delightfully precocious daughters, including Michelle, a bobble-headed dual phantasm with strangely liquid eyes, who in Saget's dissociated state lives on (as Mr. Tanner does in endless syndication). Central to the Saget galaxy of obsessions: a compulsive devotion to his onetime co-stars, the [Olsen twins](#), and a love of life-size dolls. Fortunately, the days of rubber rooms are long gone.

So instead, the cable broadcaster [HBO](#) has staged a very public intervention, providing Saget with a comedy special to work through his many issues. The one-hour session, appropriately labeled "Bob Saget: That Ain't Right," premieres Saturday at 10 p.m. It appears that in order to free his mind from the strings of the puppet master Tanner, Saget finds it therapeutic to mount a stage and perform his stand-up routine, which often includes painting lurid word pictures about the carnal appetites of turtles.

It is Bad Bob killing Good Bob.

It is a set so percussive with profanity, it seems almost impossible to fit one more dirty word in anywhere. It is the kind of material that would make Larry Flynt blush.

While the specifics cannot be reproduced in a wholesome newspaper, Saget in his HBO ramblings presents flights of deviant fantasy about his years of hosting "America's Funniest Home Videos" (1990-1997). This he alternates with outbursts of mock anger about his mocking portrayal on "South Park," his more recent creepy turn as a bordello's best customer on the show "Entourage" and the dirty joke documentary "The Aristocrats," all blurted out in a word salad of language so blisteringly blue that a parallel diagnosis, as Saget freely admits on HBO, of Tourette's syndrome cannot be ruled out.

Naturally, in the interest of science, we want to know: *Why turtles?*

We conduct our interview with patient Saget poolside by the cabanas at the [W Hotel](#), which is, curiously, just a short walk from UCLA Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior.

Question: It was hard, wasn't it, all those years, the double life, the lies, being this incredibly raunchy comic while playing this little goody-two-shoes on "Full House" and "America's Funniest Home Videos"?

"I was psycho. I was psycho!" Saget says -- and off he goes. "I literally would -- you won't even want to print this, but I went to [Disneyland](#) last night with [John Stamos](#), Dave Coulier and Lori Loughlin. We all went together, with our girlfriends and her husband."

Stamos, Coulier and Loughlin were actors on "Full House." They remain close friends, the kind of

friends who visit Disneyland together as adults. Saget says, "Everybody was looking at us, you know? We're walking around, and we're acting stupid. You know, people were like walking away from us, like we're characters, [Disney](#) characters. The kids are coming over to us. What the hell are all the grown-ups from 'Full House' doing there?"

He continues: "They reminded me last night that I used go like this all the time on the set, I'd go" -- here Saget leaps up from the table and imitates a man with a rocket strapped to his back -- "and I can't take off! I was trying to, like I had a jet pack, like from 'The Jetsons,' just trying to fly out of the building."

Away from the [Burbank](#) studio, away from "Full House"? Why, Bob?

"I was completely nuts."

Saget presents himself as a trim, tall, baby-faced 51-year-old, wearing jeans, sneakers, spectacles. From a distance, he appears almost normal. He sips nothing stronger than iced tea. Yet even this mild natural stimulant may have been unwise.

John Stamos phones us later. He hasn't seen the HBO special yet but asks if his dear friend Bob includes the bit about them having, *ummmm, what?* There's not even a euphemism. "About Bob being a real pain the neck?" Stamos suggests.

Anyway. "He is this hilarious pervert," Stamos confirms. "But he's this hilarious pervert with a heart of gold." Stamos describes Saget as "the greatest guy I know." They love each other. Like brothers. "He could have been washed away like a lot of other TV dads," Stamos says of Saget/Tanner. "But he's come back."

Back to shock? There is something about watching Saget perform his adult material for HBO -- after viewing a DVD set of the complete "sunny seventh season" of all "the fun and games, love and laughs," all the "remember-when joy" of "Full House."

"The guy that I played on that show," he says of Danny Tanner -- "where in the hell does a guy like that exist? It's an 18-minute morality play and then it's over, and you gotta get through the beats of a story that you're in for seven minutes. You've gotta resolve a problem. With a kid! None of it's even possible! However, there was a resonance. That show worked. For both shows that I did, they completely worked."

And yet. "I was unappreciated," he says. The TV critics? He shudders. "I got trashed."

But the years have passed. It's time to heal. The HBO special is a part of that. "I wasn't the guy that I am now," Saget says. "I had fear. I had a thing of wanting to be everybody's nice guy. I had a mom and a dad -- it's not hard to do the psychology of a nice young kid that moved a lot. I moved in the middle of ninth grade, moved between 11th and 12th grade, didn't have a lot of friends, really. Used comedy to make friends."

When he was a college student, Saget made a documentary about facial reconstruction. He is proud of it. After attending [Temple University](#), he came to [Los Angeles](#) and did stand-up in [Hollywood](#) clubs. For a long time, his act included a guitar. "I was only doing guitar work," he says. "It was a prop and music. And water poured out of my guitar. Which means you really can't do that in a room for more than 100 people. I used to audition for producers with my guitar. It was like it 'Broadway Danny Rose.' " He eventually got a walk-on part on sitcom "Bosom Buddies." He was not invited back.

During his formative years as a stand-up, Saget says he hung around Richard Pryor, [Eddie Murphy](#), Don Rickles, [Larry David](#), [Robin Williams](#), [Chris Rock](#), Sam Kinison and Rodney Dangerfield. Saget says, "If you're in the presence of people who are that good, I would go, 'Oh God, what am I doing? How am I going to ever get near any of these guys?' "

Saget's material has always been filthy-dirty and it's just gotten filthier. Did ABC used to flip out when he did his blue material at the clubs? "I had a couple of 'Bob, we have a problem' moments. There was something in my contract that says you can't have sex with an animal. It was very strange to have me in an environment with children. That's a joke. One of the things I did that was wrong -- it's my problem, nobody else's -- I'm validating this story. They had a stand-in doll on the show, a plastic doll, so when the girls who played Michelle . . . "

This would be the twins, Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen?

"Exactly, when they were in school" -- the law requires child actors to continue their studies with on-set tutors -- "they would give me the doll to act with. It was [for] camera blocking. There would just be bunch of guys on the floor. Nobody's there, there's no audience. And they give me a plastic doll that's about 3 1/2 feet tall, whose legs moved."

You didn't?

"So I did stuff with it. Sounds terrible, doesn't it? It's not good. If you tell people that stuff, I don't think it sits well. It does with contemporaries, but -- I don't know how you tell it. I want to be careful not to hurt anybody."

It is true. While Saget will excoriate his own work on television, he does not defame his co-stars. About the Olsen twins, there are no jokes. "I love them," he says. "When my dad died, they were there. I'm close with everybody from the shows."

He recalls a story. It is Nietzschean, in the sense of that which does not kill you makes you stronger. "I rented a car once in [Monterey](#). Went to [Big Sur](#). With my wife -- with my ex-wife," he says. "Anyway, so we're there and I walk up to the [Avis](#) counter, and the lady goes, 'Oh, you're on that show. My boyfriend hates you. He turns off the sound when you're on.' And I went, what? And I got really upset 'cause I was just starting a vacation, you know, working those 80-hour weeks. And I was, like, oh, God, her boyfriend hates me; what I would do to make him laugh. And why? Why do I have to have somebody like me? What the [bleep] is wrong with me, right?"

You could have said: I'll try harder.

"Wait, there's the payoff, it's perfect," Saget says. "Two ladies from the counter come out to my car rental with me and go, 'Oh, don't be upset about her, Bob. Her boyfriend beats her.' Don't be upset about her, her boyfriend beats her! They're telling me to feel better, because the reason she said her boyfriend hates me is she's abused. So I'm supposed to feel better? It doesn't make sense to me."

It is hard to believe someone would just say something so mean at a rental car counter, which is usually such an oasis of calm.

"Yeah, you'd think, yes," Saget says. "But also, I overreact." But not anymore. "One of my best qualities, I think, is that I just don't give a [bleep]. Because how long am I here? And who the [bleep] cares."

When did this insight occur? "I think the past few years. I think as the arc in whatever I'm doing as an artist or performer, or whatever you want to call it, changed. And getting divorced is a gigantic hit. That was a huge hit." That was 10 years ago, like three marriage cycles in L.A. "No, I can't forget that, that's what I'm saying. When you have kids -- I have three daughters [ages 14, 17 and 20] -- that's in my face. But . . . now . . . This is literally -- and I wish my dad was here, and I wish my sisters were here" -- both sisters died young, one of scleroderma and one of a brain aneurism -- "but this is literally the best time of my life. Just because I'm not holding anything back. As things unfold or don't unfold, as I get to do what I want to do, or don't, or if I don't, so what?"

See what we mean about the iced tea?

Saget does have one fear. "I'm scared of this HBO thing. You know, parents will go, 'Oh, it's dad from "Full House." We're going to go out tonight, you stay home, you 8-year-old.' And the kid watches. And the parents come home and he, like, murders them in their sleep."

Saget himself is careful not to let his own daughters watch their daddy work as a comic. "But that's the weird psychosis, or I guess you call it schizophrenia, of what I do, if I look at an audience and I see a 9-year-old out there, I'm not doing the same set. I can't have him there. I can't do it. I couldn't have my own kids at my thing, I don't want a kid there. Actually? A 15-year-old boy, my act is made for him, I'm a fartmeister, you know, and I'm immature and it's all . . ."

He changes the subject. He was invited recently to perform at [Harvard University](#) for the Lampoon staff. "We did a 20-minute 'Full House' sketch, the filthy lost episodes. Filthy. Filthy. Filthy. And I did 30 minutes of filthy stand-up. It was the first time I sang 'Danny Tanner Was Not Gay,' to the [Backstreet Boys](#) tune. It was parody," he says. "You know, it was a kind of a cathartic thing."

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