



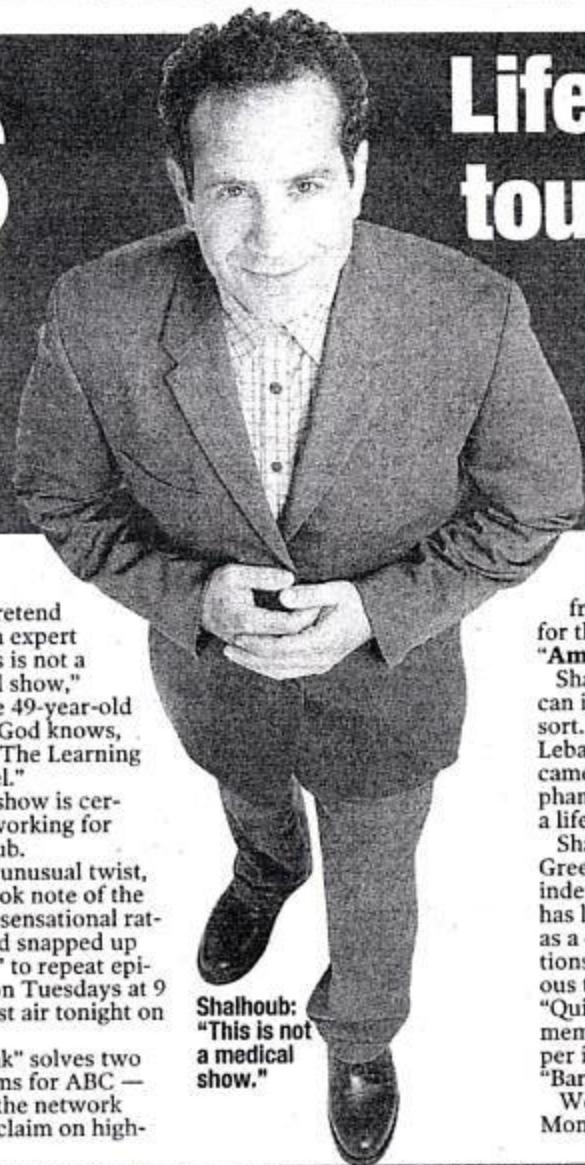
Miss USA and
Knicks hit
the net: P.77

TV Tuesday

We need to chat
Our e-mail address:
tvplus@nypost.com

Tony's award

Life is getting a touch crazy for two-timing 'Monk' star



Shalhoub:
"This is not
a medical
show."

By MICHAEL GILTZ

TONY Shalhoub has two hit movies in theaters: "Men in Black II" and "Spy Kids 2," and a third (Meg Ryan's "On The Ropes") due out at the end of the year.

But in the topsy turvy world of entertainment — where a clever website can get more attention than a \$100 million summer movie — Shalhoub is suddenly best known for a basic cable series on a channel that was best known for wrestling and the low-rent ratings grabber "Silk Stockings."

"Monk" — on USA Network Fridays at 10 — stars Shalhoub as a San Francisco detective who

fighters crime along with the symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder.

The results are scenes like the one in the opening episode where Monk is being chased by bad guys — but still is unable to resist the compulsion to touch and count every parking meter he passes on the way.

"We're trying to stay faithful to the real disorder but we do take dramatic license," says Shalhoub. "Monk is so sympathetic and he's a very brilliant man and very good at his work and sometimes his neuroses and problems work to his advantage.

"I don't think we're exploiting the disorder," he

says. "I don't pretend to be an expert and this is not a medical show," says the 49-year-old actor. "God knows, it's not The Learning Channel."

This show is certainly working for Shalhoub.

In an unusual twist, ABC took note of the show's sensational ratings and snapped up "Monk" to repeat episodes on Tuesdays at 9 (the first air tonight on Ch. 7.)

"Monk" solves two problems for ABC — giving the network both a claim on high-

quality cable drama and a pain-free sacrificial lamb for the steamrolling "American Idol."

Shalhoub is an American idol of a different sort. He's the son of a Lebanese immigrant who came to the U.S. as an orphan at 10 and carved out a life for himself.

Shalhoub was born in Green Bay, Wisc., and his indeterminate ethnicity has let him be cast almost as a one-man United Nations — from his hilarious turn as a cabbie in "Quick Change" to a memorable scene-stopper in the Coen brothers' "Barton Fink"

We still don't know Monk's ethnicity, says

Shalhoub, who's looking forward to tracing his roots, along with eventually meeting Monk's parents and maybe siblings.

There will be plenty of time for that next season since the show is certain to be renewed after its initial 13 hours end filming next month.

"I've never had a high recognizability factor," says Shalhoub. "Maybe this show will change that. It's not something I think about too much. I suppose if they start screaming 'Monk!' at me, I might think about it more."