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Television

**Nurses sneer at the
sexy young students
on 'Nightingales'**

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By HOWARD ROSENBERG

Los Angeles Times

HOLLYWOOD – In a recent episode, the sexy student nurses of "Nightingales," Aaron Spelling's successful new series on NBC, giddily cruised Hollywood as the sound track boomed lyrics from a rock song:

"I wanna have some fun, I wanna have some fun; move my body all night long, move my body all night long."

"We went with it to be 'today,'" Spelling explained about the song. Ever branded by his past megahits and sounding deeply wounded, he protested bitterly: "I'm being painted with the same old brush about 'Charlie's Angels,' and I'm getting tired of it!"

If anyone is losing patience, however, it's the multitude of nurses who regard "Nightingales" as TV's bedpan.

"It pushes my hot button," snapped Ann Sweeney, assistant director of education and training at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Bellflower.

"Never in my experience as a student and teaching 25 years have I seen anything like this," declared Sharon Hilton, director of the Los Angeles County Medical Center School of Nursing.

"These women are idiots and tramps," charged Claire Fagin, dean of nursing at the University of Pennsylvania. "This is disgusting. My students are demeaned, they are outraged, they are sickened. This is another world."

"It gives a horribly distorted picture of the nurse," said June Levine, director of nursing, acute care services, at Children Hospital in Los Angeles.

"It's the worst presentation of a profession I have ever seen," said nurse Chris Hutson, herself a technical adviser on some TV medical series for nearly 30 years.

And it comes at a critical time, said University of California, Los Angeles nursing professor Mary Ann Lewis, president of the Los Angeles region of the California Nurses Association — a time when America is already experiencing the "greatest nursing shortage we've ever had."

It was Lewis of the California Nurses Association and Ada Lindsey, UCLA dean of nursing, who initiated a national campaign against "Nightingales" after the pilot was aired last June.

More than anything else, this worry about image damage to a struggling profession already battling old demeaning female stereotypes is why so many are incensed about "Nightingales."

"If you continue to portray the nurse as bubbly headed, all legs and no brains, the nursing shortage will get worse," said Levine. "Why would you become a nurse if nursing and intelligence are two different paths?"

Surely all nurses don't disapprove of "Nightingales."

"I liked the nursing student interactions and the interactions with the patients," Peggy Diller said about the pilot. Diller, vice president of patient care services at Queen of Angels-Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center in Los Angeles, felt strongly enough to write Spelling a letter of support.