

= The Problem Solvers =

" The Problem Solvers " is the fifth episode of the fourth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 63rd overall episode of the series . It was written by co @-@ executive producer Ron Weiner and directed by co @-@ executive producer John Riggi . It originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on November 12 , 2009 . Guest stars in the episode include Josh Fadem , Cheyenne Jackson , Padma Lakshmi , and Shawn Levy .

In the episode , the new cast member for the fictional sketch comedy show The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan (TGS) , Jack " Danny " Baker (Jackson) arrives on set and learns the intricacies of the show . Meanwhile , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) offers Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) a chance to create a television pilot based on her " Dealbreakers " sketch but Liz decides to search for other offers . In addition , after offering some advice Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) and Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) decide to solve other problems of the cast and crew . Finally , NBC page Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) grows annoyed as the cast members begin to ask less of him .

" The Problem Solvers " received generally positive reception from television critics , although some expressed disappointment in the tone . According to the Nielsen ratings system , the episode was watched by 5 @.@ 8 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

This episode opens with Liz Lemon , Jack Donaghy , and the rest of the TGS with Tracy Jordan staff welcoming Jack Baker , the new cast member , to the show . After realizing that Baker has the same first name as him , Jack quickly decides to rename him Danny . In the previous episode , Danny was hired by Jack from his work as a street performer who dressed up like a robot and had very limited recent experience with " real acting " .

Meanwhile , Jack offers Liz the chance to star in a new television pilot based on her " Dealbreakers " sketch . She is initially excited , but Tracy Jordan and Jenna Maroney convince her to test the market and search for other offers before agreeing to work with Jack . Liz signs with a talent agent (Josh Fadem) to explore other options , but later learns he is a low @-@ level agent . Jack cannot stand Liz 's dismissal of him , and as a result , he announces through the media that NBC is moving forward with the pilot 's production and calls in Padma Lakshmi as a potential new host in place of Liz . Liz threatens to sue Jack and NBC for the rights to " Dealbreakers " , but Jack informs her that NBC owns the rights to it . Liz takes a meeting with Sports Shouting producer , Scottie Shofar (Shawn Levy) , and Jack meets with Padma . During their respective meetings , however , the two realize that they should work with one another . They shake hands at the end of the episode , agreeing to create the pilot together .

After giving advice to Liz , Tracy and Jenna spend the episode calling themselves " The Problem Solvers " giving the TGS crew advice on their lives . From the moment he arrives , Danny treats NBC page Kenneth Parcell politely and does not ask him to run any errands for him , a break from how Tracy and Jenna treat him . Danny explains to the two that lower @-@ level people such as pages often rise up to positions where they would be the boss of actors such as themselves , and as a result , he is polite to avoid building bad relationships with potential future bosses . Danny even speculates that Kenneth could be running the network someday . Jenna initially dismisses the idea out @-@ of @-@ hand , but Tracy becomes concerned , and tells Kenneth that he doesn 't want him to perform any more menial tasks for him ; Jenna soon joins him . Meanwhile , Kenneth lets slip that he may have been alive forever . Kenneth becomes upset that he is losing his responsibilities and confronts Danny , driving him to yell at Kenneth . Danny , who is Canadian , has had a hard time pronouncing the word " about " , but after yelling at Kenneth , and saying " about " without his Canadian accent , thanks Kenneth for helping him .

= = Production = =

" The Problem Solvers " was written by Ron Weiner and directed by John Riggi , both co @-@ executive producers on 30 Rock . This episode was Weiner 's fifth writing credit , having penned " Secrets and Lies " , " Señor Macho Solo " , " Goodbye , My Friend " , and " Mamma Mia " , and was Riggi 's second directed episode , having helmed " Goodbye My Friend " in the show 's third season . " The Problem Solvers " originally aired in the United States on November 12 , 2009 , on NBC as the fifth episode of the show 's fourth season and the 63rd overall episode of the series .

" The Problem Solvers " was filmed on October 23 , October 28 , and October 29 , 2009 . Jack Donaghy hiring the robot street performer in the previous episode , " Audition Day " , was first introduced in the fourth season premiere episode " Season 4 " , in which Jack explains that the TGS staff have become too elitist and need to change to survive in tough economic times , and informs Liz Lemon ? the head writer on TGS ? to begin searching for a new cast member to help lessen this elitist image . In this episode , the robot street performer is introduced to the TGS crew as Danny Baker , and was played by actor Cheyenne Jackson , who made his 30 Rock debut with this episode . Series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey had seen Jackson in the Broadway musicals Xanadu and Damn Yankees , the latter that starred Jane Krakowski , who plays Jenna Maroney on the show . According to Jackson in a November 2009 interview , Fey set up a meeting to interest him in a role on the program . In an interview with the Los Angeles Times , it was revealed that it was Krakowski who brought Jackson to the attention of the 30 Rock producers . In " Audition Day " , Jackson did not play the robot , instead actor Daniel Genalo played the character .

The actor Josh Fadem played an inexperienced agent that Liz signs with in the episode . In a November 2009 interview with Tulsa World , Fadem admitted to " [flubbing] a couple lines " during filming , but that no one on the set " made me feel bad . " Director Shawn Levy guest starred in the episode as Scottie Shofar , a producer for the show Sports Shouting , and who Liz has a meeting with in regards to her " Dealbreakers " talk show . Levy directed Fey in the 2010 comedy film Date Night . Padma Lakshmi , the host of the reality show Top Chef , played herself in this 30 Rock episode in which she is a potential new host for the " Dealbreakers " talk show .

= = Cultural references = =

During Danny 's rallying speech in a football movie flashback , he makes several references to Canadian culture such as Boxing day and the different rules used between Canadian and American football (e.g. 3 downs instead of 4 , 12 men per side instead of 11 , though incorrectly uses meters while Canadian football uses yards) . The episode twice refers to a fictional show Sports Shouting which features four panelists yelling at each other about sports . Some reviewers noted the similarity to the real show Around the Horn , an ESPN program which also features four panelists discussing sports in a competitive setting . J. A. Adande , a frequent panelist on Around the Horn , said through his Twitter page " Sports Shouting now tops ' Werewolf Bar Mitzvah ' as my favorite 30 Rock gag . "

When Jack tells Liz that Padma Lakshmi is coming in for the pilot she says " Then who 's going to host Top Chef ? You 're ruining my life ! " referring to a cooking reality television show Lakshmi hosts which Liz had previously shown a taste for in the season two episode " Cougars " . Tracy reveals that early in his career he signed a very badly structured contract which requires he publicize " Wade Boggs Carpet World " five times whenever he appears on camera , a reference to the baseball player Wade Boggs . Later , Jenna reveals that Scottie Shofar was her assistant in Trivial Pursuit : The Movie . The latter is a board game in which progress is determined by a player 's ability to answer general knowledge and popular culture questions . As Danny grew angry he described Kenneth as having a " weird Don Knotts face " and a " Hitler Youth haircut . "

This was the fourth time the show referenced Liz 's " Dealbreakers " story arc . This first began in the third season episode " Mamma Mia " , in which Liz had written a comedy sketch titled " Dealbreakers " , and in the sketch , Jenna doled out comedic catchphrases as relationship advice to other women such as " If he wears an Atlanta Falcons jersey to your sister 's wedding ? That 's a Dealbreaker , ladies ! " Liz tried gaining attention for writing the sketch , but Jenna took all the credit for it , thus making Liz jealous . Liz dispensed more " Dealbreaker " -style romantic advice in a talk

show appearance in the episode " Kidney Now ! " and at the end of the episode Liz told Jack that she had signed a book deal based on the sketch . In the episode " Into the Crevasse " , Liz 's book is published , but receives backlash from men close to her , as they believe her advice damaged their relationships . In this 30 Rock episode , Jack offers Liz a chance to create a television pilot based on her " Dealbreakers " sketch and although Liz decides to search for other offers she ultimately decides to work on the pilot with Jack .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " The Problem Solvers " was watched by 5 @. @ 8 million households , according to the Nielsen ratings system . It received a 2 @. @ 9 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic , that is 2 @. @ 9 percent of all people in that group , and 7 percent of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . This was a decrease from the previous episode , " Audition Day " , which was watched by 5 @. @ 9 million American viewers .

" The Problem Solvers " received generally positive reviews . Robert Canning of IGN reviewed the episode , giving it a 7 @. @ 4 out of 10 rating and opining the episode had " a few audible chuckles and several silent smiles " , and that the tone of it " was just off . " He cited that the Liz and Jack characters on opposing sides " was not as much fun as seeing them working together " , and that Jenna and Tracy 's antics throughout the series have been " funny most of the time " , though " very little clicked in this episode . " Television columnist Alan Sepinwall of The Star @- @ Ledger said that the Tracy and Jenna team " often seems too far out of the realm of reality ... to enjoy them . " Sepinwall was positive about Cheyenne Jackson 's debut , noting he " fit in well his first time out . " Sean Gandert of Paste magazine called the episode the " best so far in the season " but admitted he was " disappointed in it " for not coming " close to greatness and we all know [30 Rock 's] done it before and can do it again . " Gandert , who has not been a fan of Liz 's " Dealbreakers " storyline , commented her plot here was " somewhat annoying , generally not that interesting " , and concluded " it 's hard to really care " that Liz get her talk show .

Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad noted that he liked how Jack and Liz interacted throughout the episode , and enjoyed their meeting at the Rockefeller Center at the end . The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin was complimentary towards " The Problem Solvers " , reporting it was better than the past four episodes , and writing it had " alternating currents of competition and collaboration , hostility and affection and love and hate " that , according to Rabin , define Jack and Liz 's relationship . Rabin was positive towards Padma Lakshmi 's guest appearance , and gave this episode a B grade rating . Entertainment Weekly contributor Margaret Lyons deemed this 30 Rock episode as the best work from Jack McBrayer 's Kenneth . " If there 's been a better episode for Kenneth in 30 Rock history , I 'd love to know : From the backwards @- @ talking to the bizarre fury , this was Jack McBrayer 's finest (half) hour . " Nick Catucci of New York magazine wrote that this was a " fine " episode " with Jenna and Tracy in classic dopey @- @ duo form and a couple of great fantasy bits ... But the Jack , Liz , and Jenna triangle felt like the funniest @- @ ever Three 's Company episode squeezed into a couple of minutes . " Meredith Blake , a contributor for the Los Angeles Times , said that she was looking forward to Lakshmi 's cameo , but after the airing , " her scene fell a little flat . " In regards to the episode , itself , Blake said it was " a solid if not mind @- @ blowing episode , even with the presence of [Lakshmi] . "