

= Extraordinary Merry Christmas =

" Extraordinary Merry Christmas " is the ninth episode and mid @-@ season finale of the third season of the American musical television series Glee , and the fifty @-@ third overall . Written by Marti Noxon and directed by Matthew Morrison , the episode aired on Fox in the United States on December 13 , 2011 , and features the members of New Directions starring in a black @-@ and @-@ white Christmas television special that is presented within the episode itself .

Nine songs are performed over the course of the episode , eight of which come from the second Glee Christmas soundtrack album , Glee : The Music , The Christmas Album Volume 2 . The episode has the same name as an original song on that album , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " , which was written for Glee by the show 's executive music producer Adam Anders , song producer Peer Åström , and Shelly Peiken . The remaining eight songs are covers , and all nine were released as singles . Reviewers generally praised the music in the episode .

Although reviewers were polarized in their views of the episode as a whole , the special within the episode received mostly favorable comments , though the rest of the episode was deemed light on plot . Some aspects of the framing sequences were criticized , such as Rachel 's excessive demands for Christmas presents despite the fact that she is Jewish . Upon its initial airing , this episode was viewed by 7 @.@ 13 million American viewers and garnered a 3 @.@ 0 / 8 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . The total viewership was up marginally from the previous episode , " Hold On to Sixteen " .

= = Plot = =

Sue ( Jane Lynch ) recruits the glee club to sing at a homeless shelter where she will be volunteering to distract her from the first Christmas without her sister Jean , who died earlier in the year . Finn ( Cory Monteith ) tells Rachel ( Lea Michele ) that all he wants for Christmas is her . Rachel ( Lea Michele ) replies that he is also all she wants , but gives Finn ( Cory Monteith ) a long list of Christmas present suggestions . Her dialogue , " All I want is what I have coming to me . All I want is my fair share " is a verbatim homage to Sally 's Christmas list scene with Charlie Brown in the Christmas classic , A Charlie Brown Christmas . Just as Charlie Brown is with Sally , Finn is appalled by how much Rachel wants , though she assures him that five of the items are enough . When she later hints that an early gift would not be amiss , he surprises her with the donation of a sow in her name to needy Africans . Rachel is unhappy , reminds Finn that she is a vegan , and recommends that he stick to her list to avoid embarrassment , while pointedly mentioning earrings .

New Directions celebrates the holidays as Mercedes ( Amber Riley ) sings " All I Want For Christmas Is You " . Rory ( Damian McGinty ) dedicates the song " Blue Christmas " to his family ; this is his first Christmas away from them . Sam ( Chord Overstreet ) offers to take Rory home with him to show him a true American Christmas . Glee club director Will Schuester ( Matthew Morrison ) announces that New Directions has been asked to create a holiday special for the local PBS station , with Artie ( Kevin McHale ) as director . The station manager agrees to Artie 's concept ? a black @-@ and @-@ white homage to both Star Wars Holiday Special and the " Judy Garland Christmas Special " , to feature hosts Kurt ( Chris Colfer ) and Blaine ( Darren Criss ) welcoming their friends for suave banter and happy , cheerful songs . Rory will play Itchy the Holiday Elf and recite " Frosty the Snowman " . Sam points out that " Frosty " does not have a happy ending , and that a little sadness is also part of Christmas . Artie only wants to present the " merry " part and will be rewriting Frosty to fit , so Sam decides not to participate . Sue interrupts a rehearsal for the show to reconfirm that New Directions will be singing at the homeless shelter on Friday , but the special is also set for Friday . Artie asks to reschedule , but Sue says they are already expected and is adamant : it must be Friday night . The club members decide to do the broadcast , and Sue leaves in disgust .

Kurt and Blaine lead off the Glee Holiday Spectacular by performing " Let It Snow " , Rachel and Mercedes arrive and sing " My Favorite Things " with their hosts , Finn and Puck ( Mark Salling ) show up as not @-@ quite @-@ real Star Wars characters and perform " Santa Claus Is Coming to Town " , and " Christmas Wrapping " is sung by Brittany ( Heather Morris ) , with backup by Santana

( Naya Rivera ) , Tina ( Jenna Ushkowitz ) , Mike ( Harry Shum , Jr . ) and several Cheerios . When Rory as Itchy arrives , the others are dismayed when he says he will not be reading " Frosty the Snowman " ; he instead reads the biblical nativity story from the Gospel according to Luke .

Quinn ( Dianna Agron ) and Sam are at the homeless shelter with Sue , helping to serve the rapidly disappearing meal , when New Directions arrives , late , with more food and some presents . The glee club sings " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " for the people there . Back at McKinley , Rachel has a change of heart and names Finn 's gift sow " Barbra " . Finn does give her the earrings she wanted , but she ultimately returns them and he returns the iPod she gave him : they donate the money to the Salvation Army kettle manned by Sam and Rory , and stay to help .

= = Production = =

The episode is the directorial debut of Glee star Matthew Morrison , who plays Will Schuester . He announced that he would be directing an episode " during an acoustic set and Q & A at LA 's Grammy Museum for their Spotlight series " in late September 2011 . He ultimately did not direct the eighth episode as originally planned , but this ninth one instead .

It is also the second annual Glee Christmas episode , with nine songs , eight of which come from the second annual Glee Christmas soundtrack album , Glee : The Music , The Christmas Album Volume 2 . The only song that was not included on the album is " My Favorite Things " from the musical The Sound of Music , which was released as a single ? as were all the other songs from the episode ? and features Michele , Riley , Colfer and Criss . Although Morrison stated in an interview that the episode would include ten songs , one of them , " Santa Baby " , sung by Rivera and previously released on the soundtrack , had to be cut " because the episode was running long " , though a video of it was made available online the week after the episode aired . A scene of Blaine giving a ring to Kurt , shown in promotional photos for the episode , was also cut , and it was reported the night the episode aired that this scene would " be included in the Season 3 DVD " . Instead , a YouTube video containing the scene was tweeted by Ryan Murphy on August 1 , 2012 .

The episode itself has the same name as an original song on that album , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " , which was written for Glee by the show 's executive music producer Adam Anders , song producer Peer Åström , and Shelly Peiken , and is sung on the second Christmas soundtrack album by Michele and Criss , who also perform it in the episode . The episode also includes covers of eight songs , seven of which are from the soundtrack album : Mariah Carey 's " All I Want for Christmas Is You " performed by Riley , Elvis Presley 's " Blue Christmas " sung by McGinty , Joni Mitchell 's " River " performed by Michele , " Let It Snow " sung by Criss and Colfer , " Santa Claus Is Coming to Town " performed by Monteith and Salling ? but not by Samuel Larsen , who sings the song with them on the album ? in the Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band version , The Waitresses ' " Christmas Wrapping " sung by Morris , and the Band Aid fundraiser " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " performed by New Directions . The filming of this last piece , shot on Thanksgiving eve , involved " lots of children " . All proceeds from the cast 's version of " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " will go to the Band Aid Trust Charity .

In an interview with Jimmy Kimmel , Morrison revealed that the episode " features a Christmas special within the episode that 's a throwback and a tribute to the Star Wars Holiday Special and the Judy Garland Christmas Special " , which are " combined in a way " . Lucasfilm Ltd. gave permission for Glee to use the Star Wars character Chewbacca for the sequence ; the actor who currently plays Chewbacca was flown in for a day of filming , though " he doesn 't sing " in the episode .

The episode serves as the mid @-@ season finale . Before the third season started , co @-@ creator Brad Falchuk announced that it would be structured as two " mini @-@ seasons " that mimic school semesters , and this episode ends the fall semester . Filming began on November 10 , 2011 , while the eighth episode , " Hold on to Sixteen " was still shooting ; they continued in parallel through November 21 , 2011 , when episode eight completed filming . " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " completed filming on November 29 , 2011 . Recurring guest stars that appear in the episode are New Directions members Rory Flanagan ( McGinty ) and Sam Evans ( Overstreet ) .

== Reception ==

=== Ratings ===

" Extraordinary Merry Christmas " was first broadcast on December 13 , 2011 in the United States on Fox . It received a 3 @. @ 0 / 8 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , and attracted 7 @. @ 13 million American viewers during its initial airing , with an identical rating / share and only marginally higher audience compared to the 7 @. @ 11 million viewers of the previous episode , " Hold On to Sixteen " , which was broadcast on December 6 , 2011 . The episode was broadcast that same evening in Canada , where 1 @. @ 46 million viewers watched the episode , the lowest number of viewers for the third season to that point . It was the thirteenth most @-@ viewed show of the week , down two slots and over 9 % from the 1 @. @ 61 million viewers who watched " Hold On to Sixteen " the previous week .

Viewership increased in the United Kingdom , though it declined in Australia . In the United Kingdom , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " was watched on Sky1 two days later by 952 @, @ 000 viewers , growing over 9 % from " Hold On to Sixteen " the week before , when 869 @, @ 000 viewers were watching . In Australia , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " was broadcast on February 10 , 2012 . It was watched by 481 @, @ 000 viewers , the lowest of the third season thus far , and Glee was the fifteenth most @-@ watched program of the night , down from thirteenth the week before . The viewership was down over 15 % from the previous episode , " Hold On to Sixteen " , which was seen by 567 @, @ 000 viewers .

=== Critical reception ===

Critics were polarized in their reactions to the episode , though most seemed to agree that it was , as The Washington Post 's Jen Chaney put it , " heavy on holiday music and exceedingly light on plot " . Raymund Flandez of The Wall Street Journal called it a " jumbled mess " and BuddyTV 's John Kubicek a " total mess " , though the latter also characterized it as " absurdly entertaining " . Kevin P. Sullivan of MTV said it was " one of the most confusing episodes of Glee ever " . TV Guide 's reviewing team of Denise Martin and Kate Stanhope described it as " oddly mesmerizing , hilarious and kinda weird , even for Glee " , and Amy Reiter of The Los Angeles Times wrote that " chipper and the sad were in perfect balance and the kitsch factor was high " .

Several reviewers approved of the black @-@ and @-@ white television special that took up half of the episode . Indeed , most of these would rather the episode had consisted entirely of the special : IGN 's Robert Canning regretted that " the good stuff " was bookended with " inconsequential and awkward real world stories " , and Erica Futterman of Rolling Stone " would have preferred " the whole episode to be the show @-@ within @-@ a @-@ show . The Atlantic 's Kevin Fallon called the middle segments " a love letter to the Judy Garland specials it honored " and said it was a " bold move " for a series with mainstream youth appeal , and Rae Votta of Billboard thought the " homage was a shining example of what Glee can do when given the leeway to be strange and different " , and was another who wished it could have run the entire episode . Kubicek , on the other hand , was left cold by the " utterly pointless and plotless Christmas special " , and Flandez called the acting during it " haphazard " . The Huffington Post 's Crystal Bell said it was " just as weird as it sounds " , but she , like Fallon , described the special as a " bold move " . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club pointed out that while it was a " pitch @-@ perfect parody " of the Judy Garland and Star Wars specials , the inherent problem is that the originals were " already pretty awful " , so that to be " an accurate parody , Glee has to be awful " .

Rachel 's characterization , especially her Christmas greed even though she is Jewish , was singled out for criticism in many reviews . VanDerWerff wrote that the episode " hinged around Rachel being really excited about what she was going to get for Christmas , even though she 's Jewish " , and her end @-@ of episode shout of " Happy Hanukah " a " last minute patch job " to " stay true to the

characters as they were at one time ". Sullivan also discussed her characterization and noted that she was " a character who makes a point of her Jewish heritage often ". He added , " she was basically horrible and played against character the entire episode , so she could eventually realize that she was awful and change her ways . " Bell criticized Rachel 's list of gifts , such as " spray tan and teeth whitening " , as " back to square one " after her nose @-@ job storyline in the second season . Finn 's contribution of a charity pig in Jewish Rachel 's honor was deemed " wrong on at least two levels " by Chaney .

A few reviewers were pleased by the new friendship between Rory and Sam . Kubicek said it was " officially my favorite thing from the entire third season of Glee " , and Bell approved , though she said " the writers don 't know how to use " Rory , and was disappointed that his brotherly relationship with Finn had " fizzled " . VanDerWerff singled out Rory 's reading from the bible , which was , as Canning phrased it , " ripped from A Charlie Brown Christmas " when Linus reads the same passage , as one that " irks " him most , " because it takes a perfectly beautiful little moment from a nearly perfect TV special " and makes it a " cutaway gag " .

Sue 's sudden change of behavior in this episode caused Kubicek to ask when she had become " the moral compass on this show " , and Bell wondered , " how does Ryan Murphy expect us to like a character that continually changes " , given that whenever she seems to go " in a new direction , she heads back to her same glee club @-@ hating ways " . Kubicek also made that point that while " Sam and Quinn seemingly did the right thing by choosing the shelter over the special " , the others did eventually show up , which " muddled " the message .

= = = Music and performances = = =

The reviewers generally praised the music in the episode . Votta wrote that " musically this episode was one of the season 's overall strongest " , though Flandez made reference to the " humdrum holiday songs " . Sullivan pointed out that it was " about the songs and only the songs " , and Kubicek felt it was a " blatant " attempt to sell Christmas albums . Chaney noted that the opening number , " All I Want for Christmas Is You " , " sounded much more vibrant and fresh with Mercedes " on lead , Futterman called it " utterly joyful " , and it was the favorite song of the episode for Martin and Stanhope . Votta declared that " Amber Riley shines throughout the episode , but none more than here where she commands attention " , and Sullivan called it a " nice rendition " that was nevertheless presented with " some incredibly awkward cuts from the original song " .

Entertainment Weekly 's Abby West wrote that " Rory 's crooning take " of " Blue Christmas " was " smooth and lovely " , and gave it a " B + " , and Flandez agreed with the in @-@ show assessment that it was " mournfully beautiful " . Futterman said that the song " perfectly suits his vocals " , but was unimpressed with Rory " standing awkwardly " through the song ; Michael Slezak of TVLine noted the static staging and filming of the number and gave it a " C " , and while Chaney said he sang it " just fine " , she said he " didn 't sell it " , and gave it a " C + " . Rachel 's rendition of " River " also received divergent assessments . Chaney and Slezak both gave it an " A ? " : the former remarked that she " knows how to make the emotion in a song soar " , and the latter said " damn if she didn 't sound amazing " , though he pointed out the incongruity of Rachel having just stated after Rory 's song that uptempo and jolly is the way to go , only to sing this song , which is anything but . VanDerWerff agreed that there was " no good reason for Rachel to sing it " , and Flandez called it a " forgettable version " . Futterman 's conclusion was that " it feels a little phoned in and doesn 't emotionally connect " .

The original song for which the episode is named , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " , received mostly decent marks from reviewers : Slezak gave it a " B " and called it " fun but slight " , and Sullivan said it was " okay , which is high praise for a " Glee " original " . Bell noted that " Blaine and Rachel sound great together " , and Martin and Stanhope also praised their " spirited performances " , though they said the song sounded " very generic " . Kubicek was harsher , and wrote that it was an " embarrassingly awful original song " , but while Votta characterized it as " a weird techno jumble " , she also called it " undeniably catchy " .

The opening number of the black @-@ and @-@ white " special " , " Let It Snow " featuring Blaine

and Kurt , garnered the most praise . Slezak gave it an " A " and described it as a " jazzy , uptempo take on the seasonal classic with gorgeous harmonies and retro dancing " , and said it rivaled their Christmas duet from 2010 , " Baby , It 's Cold Outside " . While Vicki Hyman of The Star @-@ Ledger enjoyed the number , she preferred the previous year 's offering ; Flandez called " Let It Snow " an " admirable job " . Futterman characterized it as " both effortless and full of seasonal spirit " , and Votta said it was " a spot @-@ on tribute to male duets of yesteryear with that knowing undercurrent of romance even when it 's not explicit " . Chaney gave it an " A " , but she wondered at the inclusion of the next song , " My Favorite Things " , since it " technically isn 't a holiday song " . The number was also not as well received as many of the others : Bell described it as taking " a turn for the worse " , Hyman noted that it " didn 't do too much for me " , and Kubicek said it " seemed to drag on and on and on with no real purpose " . However , West called it a " wonderful effort " and Slezak wrote that " a little Rodgers and Hammerstein is always welcome at any party " ; both reviewers gave the performance a " B + " .

Finn and Puck 's rendition of " Santa Claus Is Coming to Town " was received tepidly . Votta referred to it as " mildly rocking " , and Slezak and Chaney both gave it a " B ? " : the former said it was " fun " but " not deeply exciting " and the latter called it " competent " but " unmemorable " . Martin and Stanhope wrote that it " still packs a cheesy and powerful Christmas punch " ; it was their third favorite number . Their second favorite was the next number , " Christmas Wrapping " , sung by Brittany , which Flandez described as " quite good " and Hyman said " could only have been improved by a little more Mike Chang dancing " . VanDerWerff credited Morris with being " a gifted mimic when singing " though he called the performance " listless " , and Slezak , who gave the song an " A ? " , wrote " I was just bummed that the song got cut short before my favorite line : ' A & P has provided me with the world 's smallest turkey . ' " .

A number of reviewers had a problem with " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " being set in a homeless shelter ; both Hyman and West called it an " odd choice " , and Slezak said he " struggled " with the location . Chaney called the lyrics " condescending " , and found the juxtaposition of the singers ' smiling faces and the phrase " clanging chimes of doom " to be " weird " . The song itself was given good marks : Hyman called it the episode 's " best performance " because " they each brought something special to it " , and Futterman said that New Directions " channels the emotion of the original for a fitting vocal cap to the night " . Both Slezak and West gave it a " B + " , and the former declared that " they sang the bejeezus out of it " .

= = = Chart history = = =

Of the eight cover versions and one original song that were released as singles , one cover debuted on US and Canadian top 100 charts : " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " debuted in the US at number ninety @-@ two on the Billboard Hot 100 , and at number eighty @-@ five on the Billboard Canadian Hot 100 . Glee : The Music , The Christmas Album Volume 2 , which had been released in the US on November 15 , 2011 , was the source of eight of the nine songs ? only " My Favorite Things " was not included on that album ? and it moved up to number thirteen on the Billboard 200 that same week , its fifth on that chart , having been number nineteen the previous week , though it originally debuted at number six .