

= Friends =

Friends is an American television sitcom , created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman , which originally aired on NBC from September 22 , 1994 , to May 6 , 2004 , lasting ten seasons . With an ensemble cast starring Jennifer Aniston , Courteney Cox , Lisa Kudrow , Matt LeBlanc , Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer , the show revolves around six friends living in Manhattan . The series was produced by Bright / Kauffman / Crane Productions , in association with Warner Bros. Television . The original executive producers were Kevin S. Bright , Marta Kauffman , and David Crane .

Kauffman and Crane began developing Friends under the title Insomnia Cafe between November and December 1993 . They presented the idea to Bright , and together they pitched a seven @-@ page treatment of the show to NBC . After several script rewrites and changes , including a title change to Friends Like Us , the series was finally named Friends .

Filming took place at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank , California . All ten seasons of Friends ranked within the top ten of the final television season ratings ; ultimately reaching the No. 1 spot with its eighth season . The series finale on May 6 , 2004 , was watched by around 52 @.@ 5 million American viewers , making it the fifth most watched series finale in television history , and the most watched television episode of the 2000s decade .

Friends received acclaim throughout its run , becoming one of the most popular television shows of all time . The series was nominated for 62 Primetime Emmy Awards , winning the Outstanding Comedy Series award in 2002 for its eighth season . The show ranked no . 21 on TV Guide 's 50 Greatest TV Shows of All Time and no . 7 on Empire magazine 's The 50 Greatest TV Shows of All Time . In 1997 , the episode " The One with the Prom Video " was ranked no . 100 on TV Guide 's 100 Greatest Episodes of All @-@ Time . In 2013 , Friends ranked no . 24 on the Writers Guild of America 's 101 Best Written TV Series of All Time and no . 28 on TV Guide 's 60 Best TV Series of All Time .

= = Premise = =

Rachel Green flees her wedding day and seeks out childhood friend Monica Geller , a New York City chef . They become roommates , and Rachel joins Monica 's social circle of single people in their mid @-@ 20s : struggling actor Joey Tribbiani , business professional Chandler Bing , masseuse and musician Phoebe Buffay , and newly divorced paleontologist Ross Geller , Monica 's older brother . To support herself , Rachel becomes a waitress at Central Perk , a Manhattan coffeehouse where the group often hangs out ; when not there , the six are usually at Monica and Rachel 's nearby West Village apartment , or Joey and Chandler 's across the hall .

Episodes typically depict the friends ' comedic and romantic adventures and career issues , such as Joey auditioning for roles or Rachel seeking jobs in the fashion industry . The six characters each have many dates and serious relationships , such as Monica with Richard Burke and Ross with Emily Waltham . Ross and Rachel 's intermittent relationship is the most often @-@ recurring storyline ; during the ten seasons of the show they repeatedly date and break up , even while Ross briefly marries Emily , he and Rachel have a child , Chandler and Monica date and marry each other , and Phoebe marries Mike Hannigan . Other frequently recurring characters include Ross and Monica 's parents in Long Island , Ross 's ex @-@ wife and their son , Central Perk barista Gunther , Chandler 's ex @-@ girlfriend Janice , and Phoebe 's twin sister Ursula .

= = Characters = =

The series featured six main characters throughout its run :

Jennifer Aniston portrays Rachel Green , a fashion enthusiast and Monica Geller 's best friend from childhood . Rachel first moves in with Monica in season one after nearly marrying Barry Farber , whom she realizes she does not love . Rachel and Ross Geller are later involved in an on @-@ again @-@ off @-@ again relationship throughout the series . Rachel dates other men during the

series , such as an Italian neighbor , Paolo , in season one ; Joshua Bergin , a client from Bloomingdale 's , in season four ; Tag Jones , her assistant , in season seven ; and Joey Tribbiani in season ten . Rachel 's first job is as a waitress at the coffeehouse Central Perk , but she later becomes an assistant buyer at Bloomingdale 's in season three , and a buyer at Ralph Lauren in season five . Rachel and Ross have a daughter named Emma in " The One Where Rachel Has a Baby , Part Two " at the end of season eight . In the final episode of the series , Ross and Rachel finally confess their love for each other , and Rachel gives up a job in Paris to be with him .

Courtney Cox portrays Monica Geller , the mother hen of the group and a chef , known for her perfectionist , bossy , competitive , and obsessive @-@ compulsive nature . Monica is often jokingly teased by the others for having been extremely overweight as a child , especially by her brother Ross . Monica works as a chef in various restaurants throughout the show . Monica 's first serious relationship is with long @-@ time family friend Richard Burke , who is twenty @-@ one years her senior . The couple maintains a strong relationship for some time , until Richard expresses that he does not want to have children , much to Monica 's dismay . Monica and Chandler Bing later start a relationship after spending a night with each other in London in the season four finale , leading to their marriage in season seven and adoption of twins at the end of the series .

Lisa Kudrow portrays Phoebe Buffay , an eccentric masseuse and self @-@ taught musician . As a child , Phoebe lived in uptown New York with her mother , until she committed suicide and Phoebe took to the streets . Phoebe is ditsy but street smart . She writes and sings her own quirky songs , accompanying herself on the guitar . She has an " evil " identical twin named Ursula , who shares Phoebe 's quirkiness , but , unlike Phoebe , seems to be selfish and uncaring . Phoebe is childlike and innocent in disposition . She tends to use her past misfortunes such as her mother 's suicide as sympathy ploys ? or rather , to mock others ' self @-@ indulgent self @-@ pity . Phoebe has three serious relationships over the show 's run : David , a scientist , in season one , whom she breaks up with when he moves to Minsk on a research grant ; Gary , a police officer whose badge she finds , in season five ; and an on @-@ and @-@ off relationship with Mike Hannigan in seasons nine and ten . In season nine , Phoebe and Mike break up due to his desire not to marry . David returns from Minsk , leading to the two getting back together , but she eventually rejects him for Mike when both of them propose to her . Phoebe and Mike marry in season ten .

Matt LeBlanc portrays Joey Tribbiani , a struggling actor and food lover who becomes famous for his role on soap opera Days of Our Lives as Dr. Drake Ramoray . Joey is a simple @-@ minded womanizer with many short @-@ term girlfriends . Despite his womanizing , Joey is innocent , caring , and well @-@ intentioned . Joey often uses the catchphrase pick @-@ up line " How you doin ' ? " in his attempts to win over most of the women he meets . Joey rooms with his best friend Chandler for years , and later with Rachel . He falls in love with Rachel in season eight , but Rachel politely tells Joey that she does not share his feelings . They eventually date briefly in season ten , but after realizing it will not work due to their friendship and , more importantly , Rachel 's complicated relationship with Ross , they return to being friends .

Matthew Perry portrays Chandler Bing , an executive in statistical analysis and data reconfiguration for a large , multinational corporation . Chandler hates this job , although it pays well . He attempts to quit during season one , but is lured back with a new office and a pay raise . He eventually quits this job in season nine due to a transfer to Tulsa . He becomes a junior copywriter at an advertising agency later that season . Chandler has a peculiar family history being the son of an erotic novelist mother and a gay , cross @-@ dressing Las Vegas star father . Chandler is known for his sarcastic sense of humor and bad luck in relationships . Chandler marries Monica in season seven , and they adopt twins at the end of the series . Before his relationship with Monica , Chandler dated Janice Hosenstein in season one and subsequently broke up with her many times . Matthew Perry has expressed his similarities to the character , such as his need to break an awkward silence with a joke and difficulties with women when first joining the show .

David Schwimmer portrays Ross Geller , Monica Geller 's older brother , a paleontologist working at the Museum of Natural History , and later a tenured professor of paleontology at New York University . Ross is a sweet @-@ natured man of good humor , although he is often clumsy and socially awkward . Ross is involved in an on @-@ again @-@ off @-@ again relationship with

Rachel throughout the series . He has three failed marriages during the series : Carol Willick , a lesbian who is also the mother of his son , Ben ; Emily Waltham , who divorces Ross after he accidentally says Rachel 's name instead of hers during their wedding vows ; and Rachel , as the two drunkenly marry in Las Vegas . His failed love life is potentially due to his paranoia and jealousy in relationships , and his divorces become a running joke within the series . Following a one @-@ night stand , he and Rachel have a daughter , Emma , by the end of season eight . They finally confess that they are still in love with each other in the series finale .

= = Cast = =

In their original contracts for the first season , cast members were paid \$ 22 @,@ 500 per episode . The cast members received different salaries in the second season , beginning from the \$ 20 @,@ 000 range to \$ 40 @,@ 000 per episode . Before their salary negotiations for the third season , the cast decided to enter collective negotiations , despite Warner Bros. ' preference for individual deals . The actors were given the salary of the least @-@ paid cast member , meaning Aniston and Schwimmer had their salaries reduced . The stars were paid \$ 75 @,@ 000 per episode in season three , \$ 85 @,@ 000 in season four , \$ 100 @,@ 000 in season five , \$ 125 @,@ 000 in season six , \$ 750 @,@ 000 in seasons seven and eight , and \$ 1 million in seasons nine and ten , making Aniston , Cox , and Kudrow the highest paid TV actresses of all @-@ time . The cast also received syndication royalties beginning in 2000 after renegotiations . At the time , that financial benefit of a piece of the show 's lucrative back end profits had only been given out to stars who had ownership rights in a show , like Jerry Seinfeld and Bill Cosby .

Series creator David Crane wanted all six actors to be equally prominent , and the series was lauded as being " the first true ' ensemble ' show . " The cast members made efforts to keep the ensemble format and not allow one member to dominate ; they entered themselves in the same acting categories for awards , opted for collective salary negotiations , and asked to appear together on magazine cover photos in the first season . The cast members also became best friends off @-@ screen , and guest star Tom Selleck reported sometimes feeling left out .

The cast remained good friends after the series run , most notably Cox and Aniston , with Aniston being godmother to Cox and David Arquette 's daughter , Coco . In the official farewell commemorative book Friends ' Til the End , each separately acknowledged in interviews that the cast had become their family .

= = Episodes = =

= = = Season 1 = = =

The first season introduces the six main characters : Rachel , Monica , Phoebe , Joey , Chandler , and Ross . Rachel arrives at Central Perk after running away from her wedding to her fiancé Barry and moves into an apartment with her friend Monica from high school . Ross , who has had a crush on Rachel since the two of them were in high school , constantly attempts to tell her how he feels about her . However , many obstacles stand in his way , such as the fact that he is expecting a baby with his lesbian ex @-@ wife , Carol . Joey is shown to be a bachelor and struggling actor , while Phoebe works as a masseuse and portrays a sort of " crazy " attribute to her personality based on her troubles as a child after her mother committed suicide . However the rest of the group loves her regardless . Chandler breaks up with girlfriend Janice (Maggie Wheeler) , who frequently returns in later seasons . At the end of the season , Chandler accidentally reveals that Ross loves Rachel , who realizes that she feels the same way . The season ends with Rachel waiting at the airport for Ross ? arrival from a trip .

= = = Season 2 = = =

The second season begins with Rachel waiting at the gate for Ross to declare her love for him . However , she discovers that he is dating Julie (Lauren Tom) , someone he knew from graduate school . Rachel 's attempts to tell Ross she likes him mirror his failed attempts in the first season , although the characters eventually begin a relationship . Joey gets cast in a part in a fictional version of the soap opera Days of Our Lives , but his character is killed off after conflicts with the show 's writers , claiming that he writes many of his own lines . Chandler gets back with Janice , his ex @-@ girlfriend from season one . Monica begins dating Richard (Tom Selleck) , a recently divorced family friend and 21 years her senior . In the season finale , they end their relationship when they realize that unlike Monica , Richard does not want children .

= = = Season 3 = = =

Season three takes on a significantly greater serialized format . Rachel begins working at Bloomingdale 's , an upscale department store chain , and Ross becomes jealous of her colleague , Mark . Rachel decides to take a break ; and Ross , hurt and drunk , sleeps with someone else , causing Rachel to break up with him . In the meantime , Chandler has a hard time dealing with their breakup because it reminds him of his parents ' divorce . After believing she has no family except her twin sister Ursula (Lisa Kudrow) , Phoebe becomes acquainted with her half @-@ brother (Giovanni Ribisi) and birth mother (Teri Garr) . Joey develops a relationship with his acting partner Kate (Dina Meyer) , and Monica begins a relationship with millionaire Pete Becker (Jon Favreau) which ends because of disagreements between the two .

= = = Season 4 = = =

In the fourth season premiere , Ross and Rachel briefly reconcile after Ross pretends to read a long letter that Rachel wrote for him , but continues to insist that the two were on a break so they break up again . Joey dates Kathy (Paget Brewster) , a girl that Chandler has a crush on . Kathy and Chandler later kiss , which causes drama between Chandler and Joey . Joey forgives Chandler only after he spends a day in a box as punishment . Phoebe becomes a surrogate mother for her brother and his wife Alice (Debra Jo Rupp) . Monica and Rachel are forced to switch apartments with Joey and Chandler after losing a bet during a quiz game , but manage to switch back by bribing them with Knicks season tickets and a one @-@ minute kiss (off @-@ screen) between the girls . Ross begins dating an English woman named Emily (Helen Baxendale) , and the season finale features their wedding in London . Chandler and Monica sleep together , and Rachel decides to attend Ross and Emily 's wedding . While saying his vows , Ross uses the wrong name at the altar (Rachel 's) , to the shock of his bride and the guests .

= = = Season 5 = = =

Season five features Monica and Chandler trying to keep their new relationship a secret from their friends . Phoebe gives birth to triplets in the show 's 100th episode . She gives birth to a boy , Frank Jr . Jr . , and two girls : Leslie and Chandler . (They had originally thought that there were two boys and one girl , but decided to keep the name Chandler , despite the baby turning out a girl .) Emily states that the only condition in which she would remain married to Ross is if he stops all communication with Rachel . Ross agrees , but during a last dinner with all six main characters together , Emily phones Ross and , upon discovering Rachel is there , realizes she does not trust him , which ends the marriage . Phoebe begins a relationship with a police officer , Gary (Michael Rapaport) , after finding his badge and using it as her own . Monica and Chandler go public with their relationship , to the surprise and happiness of their friends . They decide to get married on a trip to Las Vegas , but change their plans after witnessing Ross and Rachel drunkenly stumble out of the wedding chapel .

= = = Season 6 = = =

In the sixth season premiere , Ross and Rachel 's marriage is established to be a drunken mistake . Ross and Rachel try to get an annulment because he doesn 't want to have three divorces . However , he realized he couldn 't do so and tried to keep their wedding a secret from Rachel . Nonetheless , they divorce several episodes later . Monica and Chandler move in together , causing Rachel to move in with Phoebe . Joey lands a role on a cable television series called Mac and C.H.E.E.S.E. , where he stars alongside a robot . Ross gets a job lecturing at New York University and starts dating one of his students , Elizabeth (Alexandra Holden) . The relationship ends because of their maturity differences . Phoebe and Rachel 's apartment catches fire , and Rachel moves in with Joey , while Phoebe moves in with Chandler and Monica . Chandler proposes to Monica , who says yes even though her ex @-@ boyfriend Richard confesses his love for her .

= = = Season 7 = = =

The seventh season mainly follows the various antics by Monica and Chandler , who begin to plan their wedding and run into financial problems which are quickly fixed by Chandler 's secret funds . Joey 's television series Mac and C.H.E.E.S.E is cancelled , but he is offered his job back on Days of Our Lives . Phoebe 's apartment is fixed , but is rebuilt with only one large bedroom instead of the original two , so Rachel decides to stay with Joey . The season ends during Monica and Chandler 's wedding where Phoebe and Rachel find a positive pregnancy test in the bathroom .

= = = Season 8 = = =

In the eighth season , it is revealed that the positive pregnancy test found at Monica 's wedding belongs to Rachel . Phoebe at first tricks Rachel and tells her that the pregnancy test is negative , in order to achieve Rachel 's real emotions on the realization of being pregnant . Rachel projects feelings of sadness when she thinks she 's not pregnant , so Phoebe tells her the truth . The three of them rejoice in the bathroom . The season revolves around Rachel 's pregnancy ; Ross is revealed to be the father after an investigation involving a red sweater . Rachel and Ross decide to have the baby but do not resume their romantic relationship . Joey develops romantic feelings for Rachel , but she does not reciprocate them . Rachel gives birth to baby Emma in the season finale . At the hospital , Ross 's mother offers him an engagement ring because she wants him to marry Rachel . Ross does not intend to ask Rachel to marry him , but he takes the ring anyway and puts it in his jacket pocket . Meanwhile , in the post @-@ delivery room , Joey looks for some tissue for an upset Rachel , picks up Ross 's jacket , and the ring falls to the floor . He kneels to pick it up and turns to Rachel , still on his knees and still holding the ring . Rachel accepts what she thinks is his proposal of marriage .

= = = Season 9 = = =

Season nine begins with Ross and Rachel living together as roommates with their daughter Emma . Monica and Chandler try to conceive a baby of their own but find out that they are unable to , due to health restrictions . Phoebe begins dating Mike Hannigan (Paul Rudd) , and chooses to be with him over her ex @-@ boyfriend David (Hank Azaria) . Rachel and Emma move in with Joey in the middle of the season , and Rachel develops romantic feelings for him , while the rest of the " friends " try hard to get Ross and Rachel back together . The group travels to Barbados in the finale to hear Ross give a keynote speech at a paleontology conference . Joey and his girlfriend Charlie (Aisha Tyler) break up , and she begins a relationship with Ross . Joey and Rachel 's feelings for each other return , and the finale ends with them kissing .

= = = Season 10 = = =

The tenth season closes several long @-@ running storylines . Charlie breaks up with Ross to get

back together with her ex @-@ boyfriend . Joey and Rachel try to contend with Ross ' feelings about them being together and decide it would be best to remain friends . Phoebe and Mike get married mid @-@ season outside the Central Perk coffee house . Monica and Chandler apply to adopt a child and are chosen by Erica (Anna Faris) . In the series finale , Erica gives birth to twins , to the surprise of Monica and Chandler ? a boy , Jack (after Monica 's father) , and a girl , Erica (named after the birth mother) . Monica and Chandler prepare to move to the suburbs , and Joey becomes upset with the changes in his life . Rachel gets fired from her job and accepts a new offer in Paris , but Ross , realizing he loves her , chases after her . Rachel realizes she loves him , too , and cancels her flight to Paris , agreeing to stay with him . The series ends with all the friends plus Monica and Chandler 's new babies leaving the apartment , heading to Central Perk for a final cup of coffee . The finale dialogue used in this series is by Chandler , making a joke for the last time . The camera 's last view is of all of the character 's keys to the apartment on the counter table , finishing with a shot of the apartment door .

= = Broadcast history = =

Thursday at 8 : 30 ? 9 : 00 pm on NBC : September 22 , 1994 ? February 23 , 1995

Thursday at 9 : 30 ? 10 : 00 pm on NBC : February 23 ? May 18 , 1995

Thursday at 8 : 00 ? 8 : 30 pm on NBC : September 21 , 1995 ? May 6 , 2004

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

David Crane and Marta Kauffman began developing three new television pilots that would premiere in 1994 after their sitcom Family Album was cancelled by CBS in 1993 . Kauffman and Crane decided to pitch the series about " six people in their 20s making their way in Manhattan " to NBC , since they thought it would fit best there . Crane and Kauffman presented the idea to their production partner Kevin Bright , who had served as executive producer on their HBO series Dream On . The idea for the series was conceived when Crane and Kauffman began thinking about the time when they had finished college and started living by themselves in New York ; Kauffman believed they were looking at a time when the future was " more of a question mark . " They found the concept to be interesting , as they believed " everybody knows that feeling " , and because it was also how they felt about their own lives at the time . The team titled the series Insomnia Cafe , and pitched the idea as a seven @-@ page treatment to NBC in December 1993 .

At the same time , Warren Littlefield , the then @-@ president of NBC Entertainment , was seeking a comedy involving young people living together and sharing expenses . Littlefield wanted the group to share memorable periods of their lives with friends , who had become " new , surrogate family members . " However , Littlefield found difficulty in bringing the concept to life , and found the scripts developed by NBC to be terrible . When Kauffman , Crane and Bright pitched Insomnia Cafe , Littlefield was impressed that they knew who their characters were . NBC bought the idea as a put pilot , meaning they risked financial penalties if the pilot was not filmed . Kauffman and Crane began writing a pilot script for a show now titled Friends Like Us , which took three days to write . Littlefield wanted the series to represent Generation X and explore a new kind of tribal bonding , but the trio did not share his vision . Crane argued that it was not a series for one generation , and wanted to produce a series that everyone would enjoy watching . NBC liked the pilot script and ordered the series under another title , Six of One , mainly due to the similar title it shared with the ABC sitcom These Friends of Mine .

= = = Casting = = =

Once it became apparent that the series was a favored project at NBC , Littlefield reported that he

was getting calls from every agent in town , wanting their client to be a part of the series . Auditions for the lead roles took place in New York and Los Angeles . The casting director shortlisted 1 @,@ 000 actors who had applied for each role down to 75 . Those who received a callback read again in front of Crane , Kauffman and Bright . At the end of March , the number of potential actors had been reduced to three or four for each part , and were asked to read for Les Moonves , then @-@ president of Warner Bros. Television .

Having worked with David Schwimmer in the past , the series creators wrote the character of Ross with him in mind , and he was the first actor cast . Cox wanted to play the role of Monica , but the producers had her in mind to play Rachel because of her " cheery , upbeat energy " , which was not how they envisioned Monica ; after Cox 's audition , though , Kauffman agreed with Cox , and she got the role . When Matt LeBlanc auditioned for Joey , he put a " different spin " on the character . The writers did not originally intend for Joey to be dim , but found it to be a major source of comedy . LeBlanc also gave the character heart , which the writers did not realize Joey had . Although Crane and Kauffman did not want LeBlanc for the role at the time , they were told by the network to cast him . Jennifer Aniston , Matthew Perry and Lisa Kudrow were cast based on their auditions .

More changes occurred to the series ' storylines during the casting process . The writers found that they had to adjust the characters they had written to suit the actors , and the discovery process of the characters occurred throughout the first season . Kauffman acknowledged that Joey 's character became " this whole new being " , and that " it wasn 't until we did the first Thanksgiving episode that we realized how much fun Monica 's neuroses are . "

= = = Writing = = =

In the weeks after NBC 's pick up of Friends , Crane , Kauffman and Bright reviewed sent @-@ in scripts that writers had originally prepared for other series , mainly unproduced Seinfeld episodes . Kauffman and Crane hired a team of seven young writers because " When you 're 40 , you can 't do it anymore . The networks and studios are looking for young people coming in out of college . " The creators felt that using six equal characters , rather than emphasizing one or two , would allow for " myriad storylines and give the show legs . " The majority of the storyline ideas came from the writers , although the actors added ideas . The writers originally planned a big love story between Joey and Monica , as they intended them to be the most sexual of the characters in the series pitch . The idea of a romantic interest between Ross and Rachel emerged during the period when Kauffman and Crane wrote the pilot script .

During production of the pilot , NBC requested that the script be changed to feature one dominant storyline and several minor ones , but the writers refused , wanting to keep three storylines of equal weight . NBC thought the cast was too young and pushed for an older character who could give the young adults advice . Crane and Kauffman were forced to comply and wrote a draft of an early episode that featured " Pat the Cop . " Crane found the storyline to be terrible , and Kauffman joked , " You know the kids book , Pat the Bunny ? We had Pat the Cop . " NBC eventually relented and dropped the idea .

Each summer (June , July , and August in the US) , the producers would outline the storylines for the subsequent season . Before an episode went into production , Kauffman and Crane would revise the script written by another writer , mainly if something concerning either the series or a character felt foreign . Unlike other storylines , the idea for a relationship between Joey and Rachel was decided on halfway through the eighth season . The creators did not want Ross and Rachel to get back together so soon , and while looking for a romantic impediment , a writer suggested Joey 's romantic interest in Rachel . The storyline was incorporated into the season ; however , when the actors feared that the storyline would make their characters unlikable , the storyline was wrapped up , until it again resurfaced in the season 's finale . For the ninth season , the writers were unsure about the amount of storyline to give to Rachel 's baby , as they wanted the show neither to revolve around a baby nor pretend there to be none . Crane said that it took them a while to accept the idea of a tenth season , which they decided to do because they had enough stories left to tell to justify the season . Kauffman and Crane would not have signed on for an eleventh season , even if all the

cast members had wanted to continue .

The episode title format " The One ... " was created when the producers realized that the episode titles would not be featured in the opening credits , and therefore would be unknown to most of the audience . Episode titles officially begin with " The One ... " except the title of the pilot episode and the series finale " The Last One . "

= = = Filming = = =

The first season was shot on Stage 5 at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank , California . NBC executives had worried that the coffee house setting was too hip and asked for the series to be set in a diner , but eventually consented to the coffee house concept . The opening title sequence was filmed in a fountain at the Warner Bros. Ranch at 4 : 00 am , while it was particularly cold for a Burbank morning . At the beginning of the second season , production moved to the larger Stage 24 , which was renamed " The Friends Stage " after the series finale . Filming for the series began during the summer (June , July , and August in the US) of 1994 in front of a live audience , who were given a summary of the series to familiarize themselves with the six main characters ; a hired comedian entertained the studio audience between takes . Each 22 @-@ minute episode took six hours to film ? twice the length of most sitcom tapings ? mainly due to the several retakes and rewrites of the script .

Although the producers always wanted to find the right stories to take advantage of being on location , Friends was never shot in New York . Bright felt that filming outside the studio made episodes less funny , even when shooting on the lot outside , and that the live audience was an integral part of the series . When the series was criticized for incorrectly depicting New York , with the financially struggling group of friends being able to afford huge apartments , Bright noted that the set had to be big enough for the cameras , lighting , and " for the audience to be able to see what 's going on " ; the apartments also needed to provide a place for the actors to execute the funny scripts . The fourth season finale was shot on location in London because the producers were aware of the series ' popularity in the UK . The scenes were shot in a studio with three audiences each made up of 500 people . These were the show 's largest audiences throughout its run . The fifth season finale , set in Las Vegas , was filmed at Warner Bros. Studios , although Bright met people who thought it was filmed on location .

= = Series finale = =

The series ' creators completed the first draft of the hour @-@ long finale in January 2004 , four months before its original airing . Crane , Kauffman and Bright watched the finales of other sitcoms to prepare the episode 's outline , paying attention to what worked and what did not . They liked the ones that stayed true to the series , citing the finale of The Mary Tyler Moore Show as the gold standard . Crane , Kauffman , and Bright had difficulty writing the finale , and spent several days thinking about the final scene without being able to write a word . They did not want to do " something high concept , or take the show out of the show . " The most critical parts of the finale were shot without an audience , and with a minimum number of crew members . The main cast enjoyed the finale and were confident that the fans would react similarly :

It 's exactly what I had hoped . We all end up with a sense of a new beginning and the audience has a sense that it 's a new chapter in the lives of all these characters .

NBC heavily promoted the series finale , which was preceded by weeks of media hype . Local NBC affiliates organized viewing parties around the U.S. , including an event at Universal CityWalk featuring a special broadcast of the finale on an outdoor Astrovision screen . The finale was the subject of two episodes of Dateline NBC , a weekly television newsmagazine , one of which ran for two hours . A one @-@ hour retrospective of clips from previous episodes was shown before to the airing of the episode . Following the finale , The Tonight Show with Jay Leno was filmed on the set of the Friends ' Central Perk coffee house , which featured the series ' cast as guests . The advertising rates for the finale averaged \$ 2 million for 30 seconds of commercial time , breaking the

record held by the Seinfeld finale at \$ 1 @. @ 7 million .

In the U.S. , 52 @. @ 5 million viewers watched the finale on May 6 , 2004 , making it the most watched entertainment telecast since the Seinfeld finale in 1998 . Although it was not the series ' most watched episode , the finale was the fourth most watched series finale in television history , only behind the finales of M * A * S * H , Cheers and Seinfeld , which were respectively watched by 105 , 80 @. @ 4 and 76 @. @ 2 million viewers . The retrospective episode was watched by fewer than 36 million viewers , and the finale was the second most watched television broadcast of the year , only behind the Super Bowl . Following the finales of Friends and Frasier , media critics speculated about the fate of the sitcom genre . Expressed opinions varied between a signaling of the end of the sitcom genre , a small decline in the large history of the genre , and a general reduction of scripted television in favor of reality shows .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Early reviews of the series were mixed and it holds a Metacritic score of 59 out of 100 , based on 20 sampled reviews , indicating " mixed to average reviews . " Tom Feran of The Plain Dealer wrote that the series traded " vaguely and less successfully on the hanging @-@ out style of Seinfeld " , while Ann Hodges of the Houston Chronicle called it " the new Seinfeld wannabe , but it will never be as funny as Seinfeld . " In the Los Angeles Daily News , Ray Richmond named the series as " one of the brighter comedies of the new season " , and The Los Angeles Times called it " flat @-@ out the best comedy series of the new season . "

Chicago Sun @-@ Times ' Ginny Holbert found Joey and Rachel 's characteristics to be underdeveloped , while Richmond commended the cast as a " likeable , youth ensemble " with " good chemistry . " Robert Bianco of USA Today was complimentary of Schwimmer , calling him " terrific . " He also praised the female leads , but was concerned that Perry 's role as Chandler was " undefined " and that LeBlanc was " relying too much on the same brain @-@ dead stud routine that was already tired the last two times he tried it . " The authors of Friends Like Us : The Unofficial Guide to Friends thought that the cast was " trying just a little too hard " , in particular Perry and Schwimmer .

As the series progressed , reviews became more positive , and Friends became one of the most popular sitcoms of its time . It is now often ranked among the all @-@ time best TV shows . Critics commended the series as having consistently sharp writing and chemistry between the main actors . Noel Holston of Newsday , who had dismissed the pilot as a " so @-@ so Seinfeld wannabe " in 1994 , repudiated his earlier review after rewatching the episode , and felt like writing an apology to the writers . Heather Havrilesky of Salon.com thought that the series " hit its stride " in the second season . Havrilesky found the character @-@ specific jokes and situations " could reliably make you laugh out loud a few times each episode " , and the quality of writing allowed the stories to be " original and innovative . " Bill Carter of The New York Times called the eighth season a " truly stunning comeback . " Carter found that by " generating new hot storylines and high @-@ decibel laughs " , the series made its way " back into the hearts of its fans . " However , Liane Bonin of Entertainment Weekly felt that the direction of the ninth season was a " disappointing buzzkill " , criticizing it for the non @-@ stop celebrity guest spots and going into jump the shark territory . Although disappointed with the season , Bonin noted that " the writing [was] still sharp . " Havrilesky thought that the tenth season was " alarmingly awful , far worse than you would ever imagine a show that was once so good could be . " Friends was featured on Time 's list of " The 100 Best TV Shows of All @-@ Time " , saying , " the well @-@ hidden secret of this show was that it called itself Friends , and was really about family . "

Reviews of the series finale were mixed . USA Today 's Robert Bianco described the finale as entertaining and satisfying , and praised it for deftly mixing emotion and humor while highlighting each of the stars . Sarah Rodman of the Boston Herald praised Aniston and Schwimmer for their

acting , but felt that their characters ' reunion was " a bit too neat , even if it was what most of the show 's legions of fans wanted . " Roger Catlin of the Hartford Courant felt that newcomers to the series would be " surprised at how laughless the affair could be , and how nearly every strained gag depends on the sheer stupidity of its characters . " Ken Parish Perkins , writing for Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram , pointed out that the finale was " more touching than comical , more satisfying in terms of closure than knee @-@ slappingly funny . "

= = = Awards = = =

To maintain the series ' ensemble format , the main cast members decided to enter themselves in the same acting categories for awards . Beginning with the series ' eighth season , the actors decided to submit themselves in the lead actor balloting , rather than in the supporting actor fields . The series was nominated for 62 Primetime Emmy Awards , winning six . Aniston and Kudrow are the only main cast members to win an Emmy , while Cox is the only actor not to be nominated . The series won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Comedy Series in 2002 , receiving nominations in 1995 , 1996 , 1999 , 2000 , and 2003 . The series also won an American Comedy Award , one GLAAD Media Award , one Golden Globe Award , three Logie Awards , six People 's Choice Awards , one Satellite Award , and one Screen Actors Guild Award .

= = = Ratings = = =

The table below shows the ratings of Friends in the United States , where it consistently ranked within the top ten of the final television season ratings . " Rank " refers to how well Friends rated compared to other television series that aired during primetime hours of the corresponding television season . It is shown in relation to the total number of series airing on the then @-@ six major English @-@ language networks in a given season . " Viewers " refers to the average number of viewers for all original episodes , broadcast during the television season in the series ' regular timeslot . The " season premiere " is the date that the first episode of the season aired , and the " season finale " is the date that the final episode of the season aired . So far , Friends has been the last sitcom to reach the No. 1 spot on television , as its successors were CSI : Crime Scene Investigation , American Idol , NBC Sunday Night Football and NCIS .

= = Cultural impact = =

Although the producers thought of Friends as " only a TV show " , numerous psychologists investigated the cultural impact of Friends during the series ' run . Aniston 's hairstyle was nicknamed " The Rachel " , and copied around the world . Joey 's catchphrase , " How you doin ' ? " , became a popular part of Western English slang , often used as a pick @-@ up line or when greeting friends . The series also influenced the English language , according to a study by the University of Toronto that found that the characters used the emphasized word " so " to modify adjectives more often than any other intensifier . Although the preference had already made its way into the American vernacular , usage on the series may have accelerated the change . Perry 's habit of ending a sentence unfinished for sarcasm also influenced viewers ' speech . Following the September 11 attacks , ratings increased 17 % over the previous season .

Friends is parodied in the twelfth season Murder , She Wrote episode " Murder Among Friends . " In the episode , amateur sleuth Jessica Fletcher (Angela Lansbury) investigates the murder of a writer for Buds , a fictional television series about the daily lives of a group of city friends . The episode was devised after CBS moved Murder , She Wrote from its regular Sunday night timeslot to a Thursday night timeslot directly opposite Friends on NBC ; Angela Lansbury was quoted by Bruce Lansbury , her brother and Murder , She Wrote 's supervising producer , as having " a bit of an attitude " about the move to Thursday , but he saw the plot as " a friendly setup , no mean @-@ spiritedness . " Jerry Ludwig , the writer of the episode , researched the " flavor " of Buds by watching episodes of Friends .

The Central Perk coffee house , one of the principal settings of the series , has inspired various imitations worldwide . In 2006 , Iranian businessman Mojtaba Asadian started a Central Perk franchise , registering the name in 32 countries . The decor of the coffee houses is inspired by Friends , featuring replica couches , counters , neon signage and bricks . The coffee houses also contain paintings of the various characters from the series , and televisions playing Friends episodes . James Michael Tyler , who plays the Central Perk manager in the series , Gunther , attended the grand opening of the Dubai cafe , where he worked as a waiter . Central Perk was rebuilt as part of a museum exhibit at Warner Bros. Studios , and was shown on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in October 2008 . Jennifer Aniston revisited the set for the first time since the series finale in 2004 . From September 24 to October 7 , 2009 , a Central Perk replica was based at Broadwick Street , Soho , London . The coffee house sold real coffee to customers and featured a display of Friends memorabilia and props , such as the Geller Cup from the season three episode " The One with the Football . " In Beijing , business owner Du Xin opened a coffee shop named Central Perk in March 2010 . There are two Friends themed cafes in Pakistan as well . One in Lahore known as " Friends Cafe " and the other in Peshawar called " Central Perk " . Both of those cafes have an iconic couch , a guitar and foosball table , quotes from the show on the walls and even episode reruns on a projector . They 're also planning to have their own Gunther at the bar .

Friends has also developed an alternative family lifestyle by representing young people that live unconventional domestic lives . It presents the idea that " all you need is good friends " and can construct families through choice . The audience is able to identify with the program through the troubles seen on weekly episodes . It portrays a new way of living life and developing relationships which are not normally seen in conventional society . According to a pop @-@ culture expert at the University at Buffalo , Friends is " one of those rare shows that marked a change in American culture . " The images of youth and the roles they portray are better defined and represent a lifestyle that centres around creating and sustaining relationships between friends running their own lives and seeking help from each other .

The Guardian 's TV and radio blog stated that Friends has impacted the creation of other television shows such as How I Met Your Mother . The similarities between the two consist of both sitcoms taking place in Manhattan , a group of white adults who are funny and have similar character traits .

Readers of TV Guide voted the cast of Friends their Best Comedy cast of all time , ranking at 29 % of the votes , beating Seinfeld , which registered 18 % . A poll undertaken by 60 Minutes and Vanity Fair named Friends the third greatest sitcom of all time . In 2014 , the series was ranked by Mundo Estranho the Best TV Series of All Time .

= = Distribution = =

= = = Broadcast = = =

After the produced pilot lived up to NBC 's hopes , the series premiered with the name Friends on September 22 , 1994 , in the coveted Thursday 8 : 30 p.m. timeslot . The pilot aired between Mad About You and Seinfeld , and was watched by almost 22 million American viewers . The series was a huge success throughout its run , and was a staple of NBC 's Thursday night line @-@ up , dubbed by the network as Must See TV . When Crane told reporters in 2001 that the ninth season was a possibility , critics believed that he was posturing , and that at least two of the cast members would not sign on for another season . When it was confirmed that Friends would return for a ninth season , the news was mainly about the amount of money ? \$ 7 million per episode ? that it took to bring the series back for another season .

After year @-@ long expectations that the ninth season would be the series ' last , NBC signed a deal in late December 2002 to bring the series back for a final tenth season . The series ' creative team did not want to extend negotiations into the next year , and wanted to start writing the rest of the ninth season episodes and a potential series finale . NBC agreed to pay \$ 10 million to Warner Bros. for the production of each tenth season episode , the highest price in television history for a 30

@-@ minute series . Although NBC was unable to bring in enough advertising revenue from commercials to cover the costs , the series was integral to the Thursday night schedule , which brought high ratings and profits to the other television series . The cast demanded that the tenth season be reduced from the usual 24 episodes to 18 episodes to allow them to work on outside projects .

In fall 2001 , Warner Bros. Domestic Cable made a deal with sister network TBS (both are owned by Time Warner) to air the series in rerun syndication . Warner Bros. Domestic Cable announced that it had sold additional cable rights to Friends to Nick at Nite which began airing in the fall of 2011 (unlike the TBS and broadcast syndication airings , Nick at Nite broadcasts of the series , which began airing as part of a seven @-@ night launch marathon on September 5 , 2011 , replace the end credit tag scenes with marginalized credits featuring promotions for the series and other Nick at Nite programs) . Warner Bros. was expected to make \$ 200 million in license fees and advertising from the deal . Nick at Nite paid \$ 500 @,@ 000 per episode to air the episodes after 6 p.m. ET for six years through fall 2017 . TBS also renewed its contract for the same six @-@ year period as Nick at Nite but paid \$ 275 @,@ 000 per episode because airings were restricted to before 6 p.m. ET except for the first year . In syndication until 2005 , Friends had earned \$ 4 million per episode in cash license fees for a total of \$ 944 million .

Beginning on March 5 , 2012 , high definition versions of all 236 Friends episodes were made available to local broadcast stations , starting with the pilot episode . For the remastered episodes , Warner Bros. restored previously cropped images on the left and right sides of the screen , using the original 35 mm film source , to use the entire 16 : 9 widescreen frame . These masters had been airing in New Zealand on TV2 since January 2011 . Netflix added all ten seasons of Friends in high definition to their streaming service in the United States on January 1 , 2015 .

= = = International = = =

Friends has aired on different channels in the UK , including Channel 4 , Sky1 , E4 , and Comedy Central UK . On September 4 , 2011 , Friends officially ended on E4 after the channel re @-@ ran the series since 2004 . Comedy Central took over the rights to air the program from October 2011 . In the Republic of Ireland each season of the show made its European debut on RTÉ2 . After 2004 RTÉ2 began to repeat the series from the start before moving over to TV3 and its digital channel 3e in 2010 . As of February 2015 , repeats of the show have returned to RTÉ2 while also broadcasting on Comedy Central Ireland .

Friends has aired in Australia on the Seven Network (season 1 only) , Nine Network (season 2 ? 10) , Network Ten (2007 ? 09 , repeats) , on GEM (a sub @-@ channel of the Nine Network) , and on pay TV channel TV Hits formerly aired on Arena , 111 Hits . The show is broadcast on TV2 in New Zealand .

In Canada , the series was broadcast on Global . In later years , it was syndicated on several of its cable sibling networks , including Slice , DTour , and TVTropolis , its previous incarnation . In India the show is broadcast by Comedy Central India on various times .

= = = Merchandise = = =

All ten seasons have been released on DVD individually and as a box set . Each Region 1 season release contains special features and footage originally cut from the series , although Region 2 releases are as originally aired . For the first season , each episode is updated with color correction and sound enhancement . A wide range of Friends merchandise has been produced by various companies . In September 1995 , WEA Records released the first album of music from Friends , the Friends Original TV Soundtrack , containing music featured in previous and future episodes . The soundtrack debuted on the Billboard 200 at number 46 , and sold 500 @,@ 000 copies in November 1995 . In 1999 , a second soundtrack album entitled Friends Again was released . Other merchandise include a Friends version of the DVD game " Scene It ? " , and a quiz video game for PlayStation 2 and PC entitled Friends : The One with All the Trivia . On September 28 , 2009 , a box

set was released in the UK celebrating the series ' 15th anniversary . The box set contained extended episodes , an episode guide , and original special features .

Warner Home Video released a complete series collection on Blu @-@ ray on November 13 , 2012 . The collection does not feature the extra deleted scenes and jokes that were included on prior DVD releases .

= = Spin @-@ offs = =

= = = Joey = = =

After the series finale in 2004 , LeBlanc signed on for the spin @-@ off series , Joey , following Joey 's move to Los Angeles to pursue his acting career . Kauffman and Crane were not interested in the spin @-@ off , although Bright agreed to executive produce the series with Scott Silveri and Shana Goldberg @-@ Meehan . NBC heavily promoted Joey and gave it Friends ' Thursday 8 : 00 pm timeslot . The pilot was watched by 18 @.@ 60 million American viewers , but ratings continually decreased throughout the series ' two seasons , averaging 10 @.@ 20 million viewers in the first season and 7 @.@ 10 million in the second . The final broadcast episode on March 7 , 2006 was watched by 7 @.@ 09 million viewers ; NBC cancelled the series on May 15 , 2006 after two seasons . Bright blamed the collaboration between NBC executives , the studio and other producers for quickly ruining the series :

On Friends , Joey was a womanizer , but we enjoyed his exploits . He was a solid friend , a guy you knew you could count on . Joey was deconstructed to be a guy who couldn 't get a job , couldn 't ask a girl out . He became a pathetic , mopey character . I felt he was moving in the wrong direction , but I was not heard .

= = = Film rumors = = =

Following the series finale , rumors began to emerge of a Friends film , although all were proven untrue . Rumors of a film reemerged after the release of the Sex and the City film in 2008 , which proved to be a success at the box office . The Daily Telegraph reported in July 2008 that the main cast members had agreed to star in the project , and that filming was going to start within the next 18 months . When asked about the film , Kudrow said that she was unaware of the talks , but expressed interest in the idea . The director of publicity for Warner Bros. , Jayne Trotman , said there was " no truth in the story " , and Perry 's spokeswoman added that " nothing is happening in this regard , so the rumor is false . " Kudrow and Cox told the Associated Press in January 2010 that they had never been approached by Crane and Kauffman to make a film version of the series .

Co @-@ creator Marta Kauffman denied new rumors of a reunion in 2013 . She said there would never be a Friends movie as the characters had all grown up : " Friends was about that time in your life when your friends are your family and once you have a family , there 's no need anymore . " When LeBlanc visited a British polo match where royalty were present , he reported that " all they (Prince William and Harry) wanted to know was ' When is the Friends reunion ? ' That 's all they wanted to know about . " (He continued , " I told them to [censored] off . ")

In December 2013 , following rumors suggesting that Aniston and Cox were discussing plans for a 2014 reunion , a poster titled ' The One After The 10 Year Break ' went viral on the internet , claiming to be an advertisement for a reunion show . The poster was met with excitement at first , and then anger after a tweet by Lisa Kudrow implied that the rumor was untrue . It was later confirmed on January 16 , 2014 , that the poster was made by a fan , who later apologized for misleading fans of the show .