

= Pilot (Smash) =

" Pilot " is the pilot episode of the television series Smash , which premiered on NBC in the United States on February 6 , 2012 . The episode was written by series creator Theresa Rebeck and was directed by Michael Mayer . The show revolves around a group of characters who come together to put on a Broadway musical based on the life of Marilyn Monroe . The episode featured a mix of original songs and cover songs , the former being written by series composers Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman .

In the episode , world @-@ renowned songwriting duo Julia Houston (Debra Messing) and Tom Levitt (Christian Borle) are inspired to create a new Broadway musical on the life of Marilyn Monroe ? instantly attracting the attention of tenacious producer Eileen Rand (Anjelica Huston) and brilliant yet temperamental director Derek Wills (Jack Davenport) . As the four search for their leading lady , veteran actress Ivy Lynn (Megan Hilty) becomes obsessed with winning them over and native lowan waitress Karen Cartwright (Katharine McPhee) becomes desperate to make her theatrical dreams a reality .

The series received a large amount of promotion before its premiere and several ads were put into the commercial breaks for Super Bowl XLVI which aired on NBC . The episode was also released online before its original American broadcast . The episode was viewed by an estimated 11 @.@ 44 million viewers and received a 3 @.@ 8 rating / 10 share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 , making it the highest @-@ rated NBC drama series premiere in four years and the third highest new drama debut of the 2011 ? 12 television season . Despite this , viewership between the first and second half @-@ hour dropped , significantly . The episode received positive reviews from critics and was named among the best pilots of the aforesaid television season .

= = Plot = =

Noted songwriting duo Julia Houston (Debra Messing) and Tom Levitt (Christian Borle) get inspiration for a new Broadway show after Tom 's personal assistant Ellis Tancharoen (Jaime Cepero) reveals his love for Marilyn Monroe . The two decide to cut a demo with Broadway veteran Ivy Lynn (Megan Hilty) which Ellis videotapes . He sends the tape to his mother who uploads it online . Julia and Tom grow angry towards this , fearing that theater critic Michael Riedel will write a harsh review of the song . They decide to fire Ellis , until they learn Riedel loved the song and approved of the idea of a Marilyn Monroe musical . They rehire Ellis and they quickly receive interest from producer Eileen Rand (Anjelica Huston) , who brings on director Derek Wills (Jack Davenport) , who had a strained relationship with Tom . Derek demands to audition for the main role while Tom wants Ivy to play Marilyn . Meanwhile , a waitress named Karen Cartwright (Katharine McPhee) , who came from a small town in Iowa to make her theatrical dreams a reality hears the original demo song and decides to audition . Karen makes a good impression on the producers , leading to both Karen and Ivy getting a callback . Later on , Derek calls Karen to have a meeting at his loft late at night .

At Derek 's loft , he tells Karen he needs to see " everything you 've got , " a come @-@ on that momentarily panics Karen . Derek accuses her of playing the innocent and pretending not to know why she was invited to the director 's loft in the middle of the night . She retreats to the bathroom and gathers her nerves . When she comes back , she is in nothing but his shirt and , singing " Happy Birthday , Mr. President " as Marilyn , she climbs into his lap , straddling him , then pulls away and says " not gonna happen " . The next day , Karen and Ivy go to their callback singing " Let Me Be Your Star " , which closes out the episode .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

Development began in 2009 at Showtime by then @-@ Showtime entertainment president Robert Greenblatt and Steven Spielberg , from an idea by Spielberg , who had been working on the concept for years . The original concept was that each season would follow the production of a new musical , if any of them were " stage @-@ worthy " , Spielberg would make them into an actual Broadway musical . The series was mainly inspired by The West Wing and Upstairs , Downstairs . Spielberg hired Theresa Rebeck to create the series after watching her play , " The Understudy " and receiving a recommendation from executive producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron . Before the series could be produced , Greenblatt was named chairman of NBC Entertainment after Comcast took control of newly rechristened NBCUniversal . Greenblatt brought the series with him and NBC ordered production of a pilot in January 2011 for the 2011 ? 12 television season . The pilot reportedly cost \$ 7 @. @ 5 million to produce . The series was then picked up for the first season on May 11 , 2011 for 15 episodes .

The pilot episode was written by series creator Theresa Rebeck . She joined the series when it was initially going to be on Showtime . Due to the change in networks , 20 minutes worth of material was taken from the pilot and put into the following episodes , due to the timeslot . Also , the language and explicitness of the show was toned down . While initially coming up with characters , she decided to give some characters two jobs on the musical , for example Derek Wills is both the director and choreographer . This was done in order " to keep the creative team from sprawling " and in order to gain a larger audience . Despite this , she also said she wasn 't forced to make the series any more " mainstream " .

= = = Casting = = =

The first cast onto the series was Debra Messing , with her role initially being the lead character , according to Deadline.com. Smash marks the first regular television role for Anjelica Huston , who normally appears in films . She cited , in an interview with The Huffington Post , that the script , the cast and producers for the series were the reason she joined it , saying she 'd " be a fool not to participate " .

= = = Music = = =

The episode features both original and cover songs sung on @-@ screen by the characters . The original songs were written by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman . Executive producers Zadan and Meron immediately suggested the two composers to the series after signing onto the series . The pilot episode features three original songs (" Never Give All the Heart " , " The National Pastime " , and " Let Me Be Your Star ") , and a cover of Christina Aguilera 's " Beautiful " , the choice for the latter being used to extend the show 's brand to iTunes . Three singles were released from the episode : " Beautiful " sung by McPhee , " The National Pastime " sung by Hilty , and " Let Me Be Your Star " sung by McPhee and Hilty .

= = Release = =

= = = Pre @-@ broadcast feedback and marketing = = =

Before the series had premiered , some media critics stated that the series had potential to become a ratings hit and possibly raise NBC from being the fourth highest @-@ rated network out of five . Greenblatt has also stated that he has high hopes for the series . In order to make it more likely the series will be a success , NBC picked the series up for 15 episodes and opted to hold the show for mid @-@ season in order to pair it up with the hit reality show The Voice on Monday nights . Despite this , other media critics have said unless the series receives a rating above a 3 @. @ 0 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , it will be considered a failure , and only two other NBC series ranked above a 3 @. @ 0 rating at the time ; Fear Factor and The Office . The series has also been

put on Monday nights against CBS , with Monday featuring Two and a Half Men , one of the highest @-@ rated shows of the season . Also , musical shows have a known record for failures , like Cop Rock .

NBC used several forms of advertising to promote the series , airing several promos on sister channels like E ! and Bravo . There were also several ads for the series during Super Bowl XLVI , which aired on NBC . Due to the already positive buzz surrounding the show , NBC offered early viewings of the pilot on different platforms . For example , from January 15 through January 30 , 2012 , it was screened on select flights of American Airlines . Also , from January 23 to February 6 , 2012 , it was also streamed online at NBC.com and hulu . The marketing price has been put as high as \$ 22 million , although NBC Entertainment marketing president Len Fogge has denied this , saying it cost less than \$ 10 million .

== = Ratings == =

The pilot episode originally aired on NBC in the United States on February 6 , 2012 . The episode was seen by 11 @. @ 44 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 8 rating / 10 share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @. @ 8 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . It initially began with a 4 @. @ 2 rating , but dropped to a 3 @. @ 4 rating in the second half @-@ hour . Despite the drop in ratings , the episode ranked first in its timeslot , defeating the CBS police procedural drama , Hawaii Five @-@ 0 and the ABC comedy @-@ drama television series , Castle . The episode also ranked as the highest @-@ rated drama series premiere for NBC since Life . It was also the third @-@ highest @-@ rated new drama debut of the 2011 ? 2012 television season , behind Once Upon a Time and Touch , and delivered the biggest 10 p.m. rating of any drama in this television season . The program also had the highest 18 @-@ 49 rating and viewership for an NBC series in the time @-@ slot since November 2008 . " Pilot " was the twelfth most @-@ watched scripted show for the week of broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 and seventeenth among overall viewers .

== = Reviews == =

The pilot episode has received positive reviews from critics . Review aggregator Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 of reviews from mainstream critics , calculated a score of 79 based on 32 reviews . In June 2011 , Smash was one of eight honorees in the " Most Exciting New Series " category at the Critics ' Choice Television Awards , voted by journalists who had seen the pilots . Matt Mitovich of TVLine called the cast " pretty damn perfect " and complimented the musical numbers . Mary McNamara of the Los Angeles Times called the show a " triumph " and also went on to say that the creator Theresa Rebeck as well as her team , " have managed to capture the grand and sweeping gesture that is musical theater and inject it with the immediate intimacy of television . " In The Chicago Tribune she also compared the episode to Glee and A Chorus Line . Maureen Ryan of The Huffington Post called it one of the strongest new shows of the season . Another Huffington Post writer Karen O'camb praised the writing and the creativity of the series . She also complemented the New York City setting of the series saying " you feel as if you 're walking down noisy and beloved Times Square with the characters " . Tim Goodman from The Hollywood Reporter called the episode an " Excellent , a bar @-@ raiser for broadcast networks " and called it superior to Glee . He also praised writing and acting for the series , comparing it to the quality of a cable television series .

HitFix reviewer Alan Sepinwall complemented the series for its cast and music , but said that he didn 't understand the hype towards the series . He also criticized the battle for the main @-@ role of Marilyn for the musical , writing that " the show keeps trying to position Karen and Ivy as equally @-@ deserving of the part , when Hilty very thoroughly outclasses McPhee whenever the production numbers start " . Despite this , he called the pilot , " smart and slick " , and that he would keep on watching future episodes . He ultimately gave the episode a B. In a podcast with Sepinwall

and fellow HitFix writer Dan Feinberg , the two were very negative towards Jaime Cepero 's performance as Ellis Tancharoen , with Sepinwall comparing it to a failed version of " All About Eve " . They also criticized the writing for Messing 's character , Julia Houston and Hilty 's character , Ivy Lynn . Entertainment Weekly writer Ken Tucker praised Messing 's performance calling her " funny and charming " and a dialed down version of her Will and Grace character Grace Adler . He later went on to criticize the storyline between McPhee and Hilty , believing that Hilty was " obviously superior " to McPhee and that the storyline felt " strained " . He also went on to write that he hoped the series became a ratings success . Tanner Stransky , also of Entertainment Weekly , ranked the pilot episode as the 8th best television episode of 2012 saying , " After we watched the subsequent 14 episodes of Smash with a mixture of fascination and dismay (seriously , did Debra Messing ? s Julia wear a men ? s pajama top to meet her lover ?) , it was difficult to recall that the pilot was positively magical . But it was . In fact , that episode @-@ ending performance of ? Let Me Be Your Star ? (featuring dueling divas Megan Hilty and Katharine McPhee) was among TV ? s most watchable and gleeful three minutes of the year . Rare is the series whose high @-@ water mark is its pilot , and Smash is a shining example . "

David Wiegand of The San Francisco Chronicle , gave the program a rave review and saying that , " [It 's so] good you can 't help wondering why no one thought of it before , a compelling mix of credible real @-@ life melodrama with a fictionalized approximation of what it takes to get a Broadway show from the idea stage to opening night . Robert Bianco of USA Today wrote that " Unless you 're allergic to musicals in general and Broadway in particular , you should find that a compelling central story , a strong cast , an out @-@ of @-@ the @-@ procedural @-@ mold premise and some rousing , roof @-@ raising numbers more than compensate for any lingering problems . " He ultimately gave it three and a half stars out of four . The A.V. Club reviewer Noel Murray praised the cast and Eileen 's divorce storyline . He mainly criticized the staging and arrangement of the musical numbers saying they threatened the realism of the show and wrote they weren 't completely " digetic " . He ultimately gave the episode a B. Another A.V. Club reviewer Todd VanDerWerff criticized the series for not avoiding clichés but also wrote " the show is so damned sincere about how much it embraces the clichés of the backstage Broadway story that those inclined to like this sort of thing ? and I 'm very much one of them ? will forgive it some of these excesses " . He also criticized the adoption storyline . Despite this , he went on to compare the series to Hill Street Blues , ER and The West Wing .

= = Accolades = =

Smash won a 2012 Primetime Emmy Award for Josh Bergasse for choreography . The choreography for " The National Pastime " song in this episode was one of the routines that were part of the show 's submission in the Choreography category .