

= The Boys in the Bar =

" The Boys in the Bar " is the sixteenth episode of the first season of the American situation comedy television series Cheers . It originally aired on January 27 , 1983 on NBC . It is co @-@ written by Ken Levine and David Isaacs and directed by James Burrows . This episode 's narrative deals with homosexuality , coming out , and homophobia . It was inspired by the coming out story of former Los Angeles Dodgers baseball player , Glenn Burke . In this episode , Sam 's former teammate , Tom ? portrayed by Alan Autry ? reveals his homosexuality and Sam slowly becomes supportive of him . The bar 's regular customers express their disdain toward Sam 's support and fear that because of Sam 's support of Tom , the bar will become a place full of homosexuals . The episode 's Nielsen ratings at its initial airing were low but improved after subsequent airings on NBC . This episode has received more attention since .

= = Plot = =

Tom Kenderson (Alan Autry) , an old friend and baseball teammate of bartender Sam Malone (Ted Danson) , announces in his forthcoming autobiography that he is homosexual . At a press conference held at the bar , Sam is shocked about Tom 's revelation . Diane Chambers (Shelley Long) helps Sam to calm down , and they discuss Tom . Moments later , Sam publicly accepts and supports Tom and his sexuality , which local newspapers report on their front pages . The next day , as they read the newspaper , the bar 's regular patrons ? including Norm (George Wendt) ? express their disdain toward homosexuals and their worries that Sam 's support for his old friend will turn Cheers into a gay bar . Diane criticizes their homophobia and says that there are actually two gay men in the bar .

The regulars conclude that three male newcomers are homosexual and try to persuade Sam to escort them from the bar . Sam becomes concerned about dividing his loyalties between his regular customers and potential gay customers . Employees and regulars ? pulled in by Diane ? argue over the three newcomers in the billiard room . When three newcomers congratulate Sam for his support of Tom , Sam decides to not eject them and to avoid discriminating between his customers . Norm and the other regulars trick the three men into assuming that 7 : 00 pm is the last call for drinks at and escort them from the bar . Diane tells the regulars that the men they escorted out are not homosexual and that the two gay men are still present . The two men in question kiss Norm on his cheeks .

= = Production = =

" The Boys in the Bar " was co @-@ written by Ken Levine and David Isaacs , and was directed by James Burrows . It was inspired by the coming out story of former Los Angeles Dodgers baseball player Glenn Burke . Levine wanted to explore homophobia in a sports bar in this episode . However , NBC deemed the story " too risky " for Cheers , whose Nielsen ratings were low during its first season in 1982 ? 83 . Nevertheless , the production of this episode went ahead for five days ; rehearsals were problem @-@ free and some minor tweaks that did not have major effects on the script were made . The cast rehearsed for the first three days of production , the camera crew rehearsed on the fourth day and a live studio audience were present on the fifth . The cast ? including Ted Danson , who advised Levine not to change a word ? loved this episode , and the crew found it ? especially the cheek @-@ kissing scene at the end ? hilarious . However , according to Levine , the live studio audience remained silent during filming ; the ending was reshot with Norm given an extra line , " better than Vera " , referring to the character 's wife 's kissing .

Silence . Dead silence . You could hear crickets . It wasn 't like some people got it and others didn 't . Nobody laughed . Not a single person ... No one had an explanation .

Background actors portraying bar customers are John Furey , Michael Kearns , Kenneth Tigar , Lee Ryan , Jack Knight , and Tom Babson . Shannon Sullivan and John Bluto portray reporters at the press conference . Harry Anderson reprises his role of Harry " the Hat " Gittes in the cold open .

= = Reception = =

= = = Broadcast = = =

" The Boys in the Bar " aired at 9 : 30 pm on NBC on January 27 , 1983 , competing against CBS 's Simon & Simon and ABC 's It Takes Two , It ranked 41st out of 67 nationally @-@ broadcast programs and garnered a Nielsen rating of 14 @.@ 9 . In Alaska , it aired on February 10 , 1983 at 8 : 00 pm AKT . The episode was broadcast again on July 28 , 1983 at 9 : 30pm against a rerun of Simon & Simon and ABC 's television film Shooting Stars , and ranked 25th with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 8 and 23 share . It aired again on January 17 , 1985 at 9 : 00 pm against Simon & Simon and a rerun of ABC 's television film Who Will Love My Children ? , and ranked 13th with a Nielsen rating of 20 @.@ 4 ? equivalent to 17 @.@ 5 million homes .

= = = Critical reaction = = =

Ben Shapiro , author of Primetime Propaganda , called " The Boys in the Bar " an episode that pushes a liberal agenda " in a soft and funny manner [that] peppered the first season " . Shapiro said the episode 's ending shows " how wrong and silly [Norm] is " about homosexuality , and it is " simply too awkward for the general public " . Cory Barker from the website TV Surveillance disdained Norm 's comments about homosexuals but called them " honest for the time and circumstances " .

According to the book , What 's Good on TV , Sam 's concerns about losing regular , anti @-@ homosexual bar customers if Cheers were to become a gay bar is depicted as sympathetic towards regulars and " a practical argument " instead of a " strong moral argument " . Stephen Tropiano called this episode " the definite highlight of Season One " in PopMatters and , in the 2002 book The Prime Time Closet , Tropiano called it a moral lesson about judging a person based on appearances . Nevertheless , Tropiano said that the fictional baseball player Tom Kenderson is typical of gay characters who are related to a series regular , appear just once , are exploited for delivering a message about homosexuality to the audience , and are then discarded , never to be " seen , heard , or mentioned again " .

The A.V. Club critics discussed this episode in 2012 . Phil Nugent found this episode unfunny and intended as a message to tolerate homosexuals by making Norm and other regulars appear " ridiculous " . Noel Murray said that the episode 's " bifurcated structure " prevented more development for Sam 's old baseball team mate , and Murray found " stereotypes " of gay men dated . Nevertheless , Murray and Donna Bowman considered it to be more about men securing their own machismo than their tolerating homosexuality . Ryan McGee found the studio audience 's reactions for this episode ambiguous , especially years after this episode aired .

= = = Accolades = = =

This episode was nominated for the " Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series " at the 1983 Primetime Emmy Awards , but lost to " Give Me a Ring Sometime " ? the pilot episode of Cheers . In 1984 , it won the Writers Guild of America Award for Best Screenplay - Episodic Comedy award , along with " Give Me a Ring Sometime " . The Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Artists in the Entertainment Industry (AGLA) awarded this episode in 1983 for a " realistic [depiction] of homosexuals " and for Sam 's support for homosexuals in the bar .