

= Mother and Child Reunion (Degrassi : The Next Generation) =

" Mother and Child Reunion " is the two @-@ part pilot episode of the Canadian teen drama television series Degrassi : The Next Generation , which premiered on October 14 , 2001 on the CTV Television Network . The episode was written by story editor Aaron Martin and series co @-@ creator / creative consultant Yan Moore , and directed by Bruce McDonald . As with the majority of Degrassi : The Next Generation episodes , " Mother and Child Reunion " takes its title from a pop song , " Mother and Child Reunion " , written and performed by Paul Simon .

Degrassi : The Next Generation is the fourth series in the fictional Degrassi universe created in 1979 . The preceding series , Degrassi High , ended in 1991 , although a television movie , School 's Out , aired in 1992 and wrapped up the storylines of the characters . " Mother and Child Reunion " reunited some of those characters in a ten @-@ year high school reunion , while also introducing a new generation of Degrassi Community School students : Emma Nelson , Manny Santos , J.T. Yorke and Toby Isaacs .

The episode received mixed reviews from the mass media , with the Ottawa Citizen saying that it offers " nothing new to viewers familiar with the groundbreaking preceding series " , and The Seattle Times saying it " soft @-@ pedals through the issues " , although the acting from the new generation of children was lauded as " stellar ... solid [and] believable " by Canoe.ca 's AllPop . It was nominated for two Gemini Awards and two Directors Guild of Canada Awards , winning in the " Outstanding Achievement in a Television Series ? Children 's " category .

= = Plot = =

= = = Part One = = =

Archie " Snake " Simpson (played by Stefan Brogren) , a former student of Degrassi High , and now teacher at Degrassi Community School , has arranged a mixed reunion for the classes of 1991 and 1992 . Spike Nelson (Amanda Stepto) , Caitlin Ryan (Stacie Mistysyn) , and Lucy Fernandez (Anais Granofsky) , who also attended Degrassi High , plan on attending and try to persuade Joey Jeremiah (Pat Mastroianni) to join them . Joey , however , is reticent as he is still dealing with his grief over the death of his wife . Along with Caitlin 's fiancé Keith (Don McKellar) , the five friends go out to a bar for the night , reminiscing about the past and discussing their present lives .

Spike 's daughter , Emma (played by Miriam McDonald) is told by her online boyfriend , Jordan , that he is coming to Toronto for a school field trip , and asks her if she would like to meet him for the first time . Her friends , Manny Santos (Cassie Steele) , J.T. Yorke (Ryan Cooley) and Toby Isaacs (Jake Goldsbie) warn her of the potential dangers of meeting somebody she only knows from the Internet , and tell her that he could be an Internet stalker , pointing out that schools do not take field trips in the middle of summer . However , Emma is undeterred , convinced that Jordan is just a normal boy with whom she shares the same interests .

= = = Part Two = = =

At the reunion party , Joey and Caitlin meet Alison Hunter (Sara Holmes) , another Degrassi High attendee . As the evening progresses , Joey overhears Keith and Alison flirting with each other and Keith reveals he does not want to marry Caitlin . When Joey confronts Keith , their argument turns into a physical altercation , and Alison has to tell Caitlin about Keith 's hesitance over getting married . Joey and Caitlin have a heart @-@ to @-@ heart discussion about their past and their relationships , and after ten years , finally make amends , while Wheels (Neil Hope) apologizes to Lucy for crippling her while driving drunk nine years ago .

While her mother attends the reunion , Emma visits Jordan at his hotel where she meets his teacher , Mr. Nystrom (Jeff Gruich) . He takes her up to Jordan 's hotel room but as they enter , Emma sees that it is completely empty except for a video camera which has been set up . She

immediately becomes suspicious and tries to escape but Nystrom blocks her access to the bedroom door . She locks herself in the bathroom , and comes to the startling realization that Nystrom is Jordan . Nystrom apologizes and tells Emma he will let her go , but when she comes out of the bathroom he grabs and restrains her .

Unable to get in contact with Emma , Manny tells Toby and J. T. that she is afraid that Emma may have gone to meet Jordan . They hack into Emma 's email account and realize that Jordan has told her a number of lies . After discovering which hotel Emma is meeting Jordan at , they rush to the school to inform Spike . As Nystrom attempts to rape Emma , Spike and Snake arrive just in time to save her . Emma manages to break free from Nystrom and rushes out of the hotel room . Snake restrains Nystrom until the police arrive to take him away .

= = Production = =

Linda Schuyler had co -@-@ created The Kids of Degrassi Street in 1979 with Kit Hood , and Yan Moore was a writer on that series . As the children grew up , the Degrassi franchise developed into Degrassi Junior High and Degrassi High . In 1999 two episodes of Jonovision , a CBC Television talk show aimed at teenagers , reunited some of the cast members from the series . At the same time , Schuyler and Moore were developing a new television drama . When the Jonovision reunion episode proved to be popular , Schuyler and Moore wondered about reuniting the characters , too . As the months passed , they began thinking about what might have happened to the characters of Degrassi High and realized that the character Emma Nelson , born at the end of Degrassi Junior High 's second season , would soon be entering junior high school . Stephen Stohn , Schuyler 's husband suggested Degrassi : The Next Generation as the name for the new sequel series , borrowing the concept from Star Trek : The Next Generation , of which he was a fan .

The new series was offered a place on a number of television networks , with CTV and CBC (the franchise 's former network) vying as the top contenders . CTV won through , offering \$ 10 million for a fifteen @-@ episode season . The project was greenlit in May 2000 , with the originally planned reunion episode serving as the pilot to the new series . CTV announced the new series at its annual press conference in June 2001 , and said the pilot would air in the fall .

In contrast to the previous Degrassi series , which were filmed on and around De Grassi Street in Riverdale , Toronto , Degrassi Junior High used Vincent Massey Public School , then known as Daisy Avenue Public School , as its primary filming location , and Centennial College was used in Degrassi High . Degrassi : The Next Generation is filmed at Epitome Pictures ' studios in North York , Toronto . A 100 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (9 @,@ 300 m2) former printing factory was converted in 1997 for Epitome , consisting of four soundstages and a backlot . The exterior of Degrassi Community School was located on the studio 's backlot , and used the same colours and glass pattern as Degrassi High 's Centennial College .

Production on " Mother and Child Reunion " began earlier than expected , as CTV initially planned to launch the series in January 2002 . At the eleventh hour the broadcaster decided to bring it forward to October 2001 to coincide with the back @-@ to @-@ school season . The episode was written by series co @-@ creator Moore , also credited as creative consultant , and script editor Aaron Martin . Co @-@ creator Schuyler , with her husband and Epitome Pictures partner Stohn , served as executive producers . The line producer was David Lowe . " Mother and Child Reunion " was directed by Bruce McDonald , who had previously directed the films Roadkill (1989) , Highway 61 (1991) , Hard Core Logo (1996) , and the television series Queer As Folk (2001 ? 2005) . Epitome Pictures sought funding from the Government of Canada , through its two Crown corporations , Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Television Fund , which provide financial support to Canadian audiovisual productions . Filming began on July 3 , before Epitome Pictures could finalize their contracts with Telefilm and the Television Fund . Other financial contributors included Royal Bank of Canada , Cogeco , Shaw Communications , and Bell Canada .

To appeal to Degrassi 's established audience , a number of references to events which occurred in Degrassi Junior High , Degrassi High and School 's Out were written into the episode . Throughout those two series , Joey would frequently wear a fedora which became that character 's trademark

prop . The fedora made a reappearance in this episode , and was worn by Manny , Spike , Snake , Caitlin and Lucy , but not Joey , and it appeared in every scene which featured a character from the old series . The accident in School 's Out when Wheels hit Lucy while drink @-@ driving was discussed twice , first at the bar when the characters were discussing their lives , and a second time when Wheels came to the reunion to apologize to Lucy . Finally , Joey and Caitlin made amends ; their relationship had ended when he cheated on her with Tessa in School 's Out .

Prior to the episode airing , a website was created with a " virtual school " in which fans could " enrol " in order to receive regular emails from their character " classmates " and discuss ongoing plots , in an effort to provide a complete viewing experience for the audience . As the broadcast date of the episode neared , more content was added to the website to make it appear as if it were a true school reunion website . The website was actually seen on screen when the characters Spike and Caitlin were reminiscing about their high school days .

" Mother and Child Reunion " aired on the terrestrial television network CTV on October 14 , 2001 and was advertised as a television special . In the United States it was broadcast on July 1 , 2002 on The N , a digital cable network , and served as the final episode of season one . In Australia , the episode aired on the terrestrial network ABC TV on August 1 , 2002 . The episode has been released on DVD as part of the complete first season DVD boxset , which was released in Canada on October 19 , 2004 , in the U.S. on September 28 , 2004 , and in Australia on September 8 , 2010 . The episode is also available at iTunes Stores to download and watch on home computers and certain iPod models , and at Zune Marketplace for the Xbox 360 and Zune media players .

= = Cast = =

Producers were able to bring back a number of actors from Degrassi High to guest star as their characters for the reunion storyline . Stefan Brogren , Pat Mastroianni , Stacie Mistysyn and Amanda Stepto agreed early on to return for the episode to play their characters Archie " Snake " Simpson , Joey Jeremiah , Caitlin Ryan and Christine " Spike " Nelson respectively , and appeared at the CTV press conference in June to publicize the new series . Brogren and Stepto signed contracts to appear in the entire season . Dan Woods also returned to play Dan Raditch , now principal of Degrassi Community School . By the time " Mother and Child Reunion " began to shoot , twelve more former Degrassi High cast members had agreed to appear : Danah Jean Brown (Trish Skye) , Darrin Brown (Dwayne Myers) , Michael Carry (Simon Dexter) , Irene Courakos (Alexa Pappadopoulos) , Chrissa Erodou (Diana Economopoulos) , Anais Granofsky (Lucy Fernandez) , Rebecca Haines (Kathleen Mead) , Sara Holmes (Alison Hunter) , Neil Hope (Derek " Wheels " Wheeler) , Kyra Levy (Maya Goldberg) , Cathy Keenan (Liz O 'Rourke) , and Siluck Saysanasy (Yick Yu) all reprised their roles .

For the new generation of students , the producers chose from six hundred auditionees , all of whom were children in an attempt to provide a group of characters that the target audience of teenagers could relate to , rather than actors in their twenties pretending to be teenagers , something other shows of the same period and target audience such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Dawson 's Creek were doing . Miriam McDonald first auditioned in October 2000 to play Emma Nelson , Spike 's daughter , and was selected for the role after a callback and three screen tests . Ryan Cooley appeared as J.T. Yorke , Jake Goldsbie as Toby Isaacs , and Cassie Steele as Manny Santos . All signed their contracts just days before appearing at the CTV press conference . Christina Schmidt appeared briefly as Terri McGreggor , and Melissa McIntyre appeared in just one scene as Ashley Kerwin ; she had no lines to speak in this episode . Cassie Steele 's sister , Alex Steele , made her first appearance as Angela Jeremiah , Joey 's six @-@ year @-@ old daughter . She returned with Mastroianni to the series at the beginning of season two to take on more permanent roles .

Film director Kevin Smith , who had been a fan of Degrassi from the early 1990s when he worked at a convenience store in Leonardo , New Jersey , has paid homage to Degrassi by making reference to it in several of his films . For example , he named a Clerks character Caitlin Bree after Caitlin Ryan , his favorite Degrassi character , wrote Shannen Doherty 's character Rene wearing a

Degrassi jacket throughout his Mallrats film , and had Jason Lee 's character in Chasing Amy specifically mention Degrassi Junior High as the television show he would rather be watching , instead of going out . At the press conference for the new series , Schuyler announced that Smith would appear in " Mother and Child Reunion " as Caitlin 's boyfriend , but due to scheduling conflicts he was unable to film the role and it was passed on to Don McKellar . Smith and his View Askewniverse sidekick Jason Mewes later guest starred in Degrassi : The Next Generation for three episodes of season four , two episodes of season five , and four episodes of season eight .

= = Reception = =

" Mother and Child Reunion " received mixed reviews from the media . Stephanie McGrath of Canoe.ca 's AllPop acknowledged Miriam McDonald 's portrayal of Emma Nelson as " stellar acting abilities in a super creepy storyline ... high on tension , low on cheese [and] top @-@ notch " , and continued , " The young actors actually showed up their classic Degrassi counter @-@ parts in the pilot episode . Their acting was solid , believable and age @-@ appropriate , while some of the older crowd 's dialogue sounded a bit stilted and over @-@ rehearsed . Slightly wooden acting aside , it was still good to see Joey , Caitlin and the gang together again . Emma 's story @-@ line demonstrates that the creative forces behind The Next Generation haven 't lost touch with teens yet , showing that one instalment of Degrassi : The Next Generation is worth 20 episodes of Dawson 's Creek . "

Tony Atherton of the Ottawa Citizen had mixed feelings of the new incarnation , saying it " has a cleaner , more polished look , has lost its edge [and offers] nothing new to viewers familiar with the groundbreaking preceding series , nor to anyone else who has watched the deluge of teen dramas since " , adding that because there is " little ground left to break in teen drama there is a sense of déjà vu with regards to the plots and characters " . He did , however , praise the show for having " the same simple narrative told from a kid 's viewpoint , and the same regard for unvarnished reality [as Degrassi Junior High and Degrassi High] . It is light years from far @-@ fetched high @-@ school melodramas like Boston Public and Dawson 's Creek ... is every bit as good as its beloved predecessor . In fact , in some respects it is even better " .

When the series began in the U.S. , The Seattle Times ' Melanie McFarland was unsure whether its success and popularity in Canada would continue across the border . " As popular as Degrassi was , it was still a mere cult hit in the United States ; the crowd that had access to it initially on PBS might not be able to tune into [The N] . Soft @-@ pedaling through the issues might work for today 's family of viewers , but what 's gentle enough for Mom and Dad 's peace of mind might not be enough to hook Junior or the original Degrassi 's older fans " . She was , however , " happy The N chose Degrassi students to navigate teen perils instead of digging up Screech and the gang characters from Saved by the Bell , a popular children 's sitcom from the early 1990s for another nauseating go @-@ round " .

" Mother and Child Reunion " was nominated for two Directors Guild of Canada Awards , winning in the " Outstanding Achievement in a Television Series ? Children 's " category , and picked up two Gemini Award nominations in the categories for " Best Photography in a Dramatic Program or Series " and " Best Short Dramatic Program " .