

## = The Purple Piano Project =

" The Purple Piano Project " is the premiere episode of the third season of the American musical television series Glee , and the forty @-@ fifth overall . The episode was written by series co @-@ creator Brad Falchuk , directed by Eric Stoltz , and first aired on September 20 , 2011 on Fox in the United States . It features the start of a new school year at McKinley High , and for its glee club , New Directions . Members of the club have left , and a recruitment drive is launched to bring the numbers back up . Blaine Anderson ( Darren Criss ) , Kurt Hummel 's ( Chris Colfer ) boyfriend , transfers from Dalton Academy to McKinley High , and Mercedes Jones gets a new boyfriend . Sue Sylvester is running for Congress .

The episode received mixed @-@ to @-@ positive reviews , with favorable notice being taken of the renewed focus on the core characters , though there was a lack of overall enthusiasm from several reviewers . The subplot with Kurt and Rachel Berry ( Lea Michele ) , and its introduction of Harmony ( Lindsay Pearce ) , garnered praise for all three performers . The musical performances were generally well @-@ received , and the " Anything Goes " / " Anything You Can Do " mash @-@ up featuring Pearce was widely acclaimed . Five covers were released as singles , three of which charted on the Billboard Hot 100 and the Canadian Hot 100 . Upon its initial airing , this episode was viewed by 9 @.@ 21 million American viewers and garnered a 4 @.@ 0 / 11 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 age group . The total viewership and ratings for this episode were down significantly from the previous episode , " New York " .

## = = Plot = =

It is a new year at McKinley High . New Directions glee club director Will Schuester ( Matthew Morrison ) and guidance counselor Emma Pillsbury ( Jayma Mays ) are now sharing an apartment and a bed . Sue Sylvester ( Jane Lynch ) , coach of the Cheerios cheerleading squad , is running for Congress but doing badly in the polls . Glee club member Mike Chang ( Harry Shum , Jr . ) is now a senior , while fellow members Tina Cohen @-@ Chang ( Jenna Ushkowitz ) and Artie Abrams ( Kevin McHale ) are juniors . Club co @-@ captain Finn Hudson ( Cory Monteith ) , a senior , has no idea what to do about his future . Mercedes Jones ( Amber Riley ) has a new boyfriend ( LaMarcus Tinker ) ; her former boyfriend Sam Evans ( Chord Overstreet ) moved to another state . Three New Directions members have left : Sam , Lauren Zizes ( Ashley Fink ) , who also broke up with Puck ( Mark Salling ) , and Sam 's ex @-@ girlfriend Quinn Fabray ( Dianna Agron ) , who has completely reinvented herself with pink hair , a nose ring and a tattoo ; she has taken up smoking , and has made friends with a group of outcast girls called the Skanks . She refuses to rejoin either the Cheerios or New Directions .

To recruit new talent , Will places several purple pianos around the school and encourages the club to sing whenever they see one . When Mike and Tina play on one in a hallway , Sue interrupts them by snapping the piano strings with wire cutters , and is praised for doing so by an arts @-@ hating teacher ( Barbara Tarbuck ) , who promises to vote for her . An inspired Sue goes on television and vows that , if elected , she will cut all funding for school arts programs until all students read at or above grade level . She makes Santana Lopez ( Naya Rivera ) and Becky Jackson ( Lauren Potter ) cheerleading co @-@ captains , to their mutual disgust , and gets their pledge to help her sabotage the glee club . After New Directions performs " We Got the Beat " in the cafeteria , Becky starts a food fight that targets the club . Following lunch , Sugar Motta ( Vanessa Lengies ) auditions , but cannot sing in tune . An agonized Will eventually rejects Sugar , but gains a new recruit when Kurt Hummel ( Chris Colfer ) convinces his boyfriend Blaine Anderson ( Darren Criss ) to transfer from Dalton Academy .

Kurt and Rachel see Emma about their plans to attend college in New York City . She suggests they consider a top school for the dramatic arts there , and the two of them attend an Ohio " mixer " for students interested in applying . They have rehearsed " Ding @-@ Dong ! The Witch Is Dead " , and expect to overawe the other attendees with the performance , but are instead intimidated by their performance of an " Anything Goes " and " Anything You Can Do " mash @-@ up led by

Harmony ( Lindsay Pearce ) . Although badly shaken , they vow to persevere .

Blaine sings " It 's Not Unusual " to a large crowd in the school courtyard while a growing number of Cheerios , directed by Santana , join in as back @-@ up dancers . As the number is ending , the Cheerios circle the purple piano , and they each sprinkle it with lighter fluid . Quinn flicks her lit cigarette onto the piano , and it bursts into flames . Will tells Santana that because of her sabotage she is banned from New Directions . Rachel breaks up the resulting pity party by singing the opening to " You Can 't Stop the Beat " , and they all perform the song in the auditorium , while Quinn secretly watches from above .

= = Production = =

The first day of filming for the episode was August 9 , 2011 , though some cast members were called the day before to begin recording musical numbers . Murphy realized that The Glee Project runner @-@ up Lindsay Pearce would be ideal for an already @-@ written role in the episode , but the filming needed to take place before the project 's finale was broadcast on August 21 , 2011 , upon which it would be revealed that she had won a two @-@ episode prize . They " kept delaying " the shoot , and " snuck [ her ] into a soundstage to make sure no one recognized her . " In aid of this secrecy , her name was omitted from the Fox press release for the episode . Once Murphy had cast Pearce , he made the musical number she was to appear in bigger . According to Lea Michele , the filming of the first episode ended on August 19 , 2011 .

Returning recurring characters that appear in the episode include ex @-@ glee club member Lauren Zizes ( Ashley Fink ) , Principal Figgins ( Iqbal Theba ) , football coach Shannon Beiste ( Dot @-@ Marie Jones ) , cheerleader Becky Jackson ( Lauren Potter ) , school reporter Jacob Ben Israel ( Josh Sussman ) , and television anchors Rod Remington ( Bill A. Jones ) and Andrea Carmichael ( Earlene Davis ) . Three new recurring characters were introduced : football player Shane ( LaMarcus Tinker ) , who is the new boyfriend of Mercedes Jones ( Amber Riley ) , Sugar Motta ( Lengies ) and Pearce as Harmony . Effective with this episode , former recurring guest stars Harry Shum , Jr. as Mike Chang and Darren Criss as Blaine Anderson join the main cast , while Jessalyn Gilsig and Mike O 'Malley , who play Will 's wife Terri Schuester and Kurt 's father Burt Hummel respectively , are no longer given starring credits . Gilsig was in the main cast for the first two seasons , and her change had been previously reported . O 'Malley 's had not , but he is listed in the Fox press release for the second episode as being a guest star , his credit in the first season . Barbara Tarbuck guest starred as Nancy Bletheim , a geometry teacher at McKinley .

At the 2011 San Diego Comic @-@ Con International on July 24 , 2011 , series creator Brad Falchuk said that in the first episode of the third season , " The opening sequence is everybody saying what they want to do when they grow up , so you see everyone 's anxieties . " He also stated , " Come the first episode back , you see who the seniors and juniors are . "

The episode features seven musical cover versions . Two are in the form of a mash @-@ up of " Anything Goes " from the Cole Porter musical Anything Goes and " Anything You Can Do " from Irving Berlin 's Annie Get Your Gun , with the lead sung by Pearce . The other five are " You Can 't Stop the Beat " from the musical Hairspray and " We Got the Beat " by The Go @-@ Gos , both performed by New Directions ; " Ding @-@ Dong ! The Witch Is Dead " from the film The Wizard of Oz ( as performed by Barbra Streisand and Harold Arlen from Streisand 's Duets album ) , sung by Michele and Colfer ; the Tom Jones song " It 's Not Unusual " featuring Criss ; and " Big Spender " from the musical Sweet Charity , performed by Lengies . All songs , except for " Big Spender , " were released as singles , available for digital download .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Purple Piano Project " was first broadcast on September 20 , 2011 in the United States on

Fox . It garnered a 4 @. @ 0 / 11 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , and received 9 @. @ 21 million American viewers during its initial airing . It was beaten in its timeslot by the NCIS premiere on CBS , which garnered a 4 @. @ 3 / 12 rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , and also by the premiere of the new show New Girl that followed Glee on Fox , which brought in a 4 @. @ 8 / 12 rating / share and 10 @. @ 27 million viewers . The Glee numbers were down by over 25 % from the season two opener , " Audition " , which was watched by 12 @. @ 45 million American viewers and received a 5 @. @ 6 / 16 rating / share , and down nearly as much from the season two finale , " New York " , which attracted 11 @. @ 80 million viewers and a 4 @. @ 6 / 11 rating / share . However , with DVR numbers , the episode viewership increased to a total of 12 @. @ 21 million viewers and a 5 @. @ 3 18 @-@ 49 rating .

In the UK , " The Purple Piano Project " premiered on digital subscription channel Sky1 with an overnight average of 639 @, @ 000 viewers ( 2 @. @ 8 % ) , down by nearly 50 % compared to the overnight rating of the season two finale , " New York " , which aired on E4 . Final ratings brought Glee up to 1 @. @ 17 million viewers . It was the ninth @-@ most watched show on cable for the week , down 55 % from " New York " and 61 % from " Audition " , both of which were the top @-@ ranked cable shows in their respective weeks of broadcast . The episode 's Australian broadcast attained 760 @, @ 000 viewers , which made Glee the twelfth most @-@ watched program of the day , although viewership was down almost 30 % from the 987 @, @ 000 viewers of " New York " . In Canada , 2 @. @ 10 million viewers watched the episode , where it was the most @-@ viewed show in its timeslot and outperformed its closest competitor by 183 % in the 18 ? 49 demographic . It was the tenth most @-@ viewed show of the week , down three slots but up 16 % from the 1 @. @ 77 million who watched " New York " .

= = = Social media = = =

The night the episode debuted , several topics related to the show appeared in the top ten trending topics on Twitter . At one point , Glee cast member Kevin McHale tweeted " 5 TT 's ! Woo woo ! " , indicating that five of the top ten slots were filled by Glee @-@ related topics . The Hollywood Reporter , in their story on the online reaction to the show , said that there were four of ten topics claimed by the debut rather than five : " # glee " , " Kurt and Rachel " , " Sue Sylvester " and " Warblers " .

Twitter was also used to advertise the show . To highlight the beginning of the third season and its move to a new channel , Sky was the first company to use Twitter 's geographically targeted ad capability in the UK with a " promoted trend " that was displayed on September 22 , 2011 , the day that Glee debuted on Sky1 .

= = = Critical response = = =

" The Purple Piano Project " was given mixed to positive reviews by critics . Jenna Mullins of E ! Online called it " a perfect season @-@ starter of an episode " . The Atlantic 's Kevin Fallon appreciated that it tackled some of the show 's biggest problems , such as the surfeit of central characters and their previously un @-@ addressed ages . He was particularly pleased that the episode focussed on typical high school life , rather than the adult characters or more serious issues . Bobby Hankinson of the Houston Chronicle approved of the " clear trajectory " set out for the characters , and noted that he looked forward to seeing their various storylines develop . Though AOLTV 's Crystal Bell worried that clarifying the teenagers ' ages could result in the younger characters being overlooked in future episodes , she was glad that the premiere saw the show return to its roots : " underdogs , show tunes and Sue Sylvester " . A similar sentiment was expressed by Amy Reiter of the Los Angeles Times , who was hopeful that renewed focus on the core characters would lead to " a great year " . The Huffington Post 's Amy Lee observed that " Glee has a tendency to oscillate between sappy and nasty , sometimes without any warning " , and then noted that " The Purple Piano Project " was more tonally balanced than the majority of the second season . Anthony Benigno of The Faster Times deemed the episode " admirably straightforward " ,

unmarred by the sentimentality and inconsistencies which plagued previous episodes . His praised was tempered , however , and he wrote , " I wouldn 't go so far as to call the episode good , it was oddly lifeless and the stakes seemed almost nonexistent at times . It has the feel of a show rediscovering itself , but , all things considered , Ryan Murphy and Co. handled the task relatively well . "

James Poniewozik of Time took a more negative stance . He wrote that " The Purple Piano Project " " was not a particularly good episode of Glee " , one which was hindered by the vast number of central characters , " but it did at least suggest where the third season of the show could find its strong core stories , and also ... the numerous ways in which it could get sidetracked into tangential ridiculousness . " The A.V. Club 's Todd VanDerWerff graded the episode " D + " . He summarised it as " a handful of okay performances , one or two pretty good lines , and then a whole bunch of awful " . Rolling Stone 's Erica Futterman praised the episode 's humor and plot development , but commented that it " didn 't hit any of the emotional notes Glee is capable of . " Robert Canning of IGN rated it an " okay " 6 @. @ 5 out of 10 . He too found " there were still quite a few laughs to be had " , but felt the episode suffered from its repetitiveness , as Sue 's hatred of the glee club and New Directions ' recruitment problems have been thoroughly explored before . The Dallas Morning News 's Samantha Urban noted that Murphy failed to deliver on his promise to increase Mercedes and Tina 's roles , and couldn 't accept that Sue would be allowed to promote her congressional campaign on her local news commentary spot , but overall was " pretty impressed " with what she called " a solid episode of Glee that made [ her ] feel cautiously optimistic about the season ahead . " Lisa Respers France of CNN summed up the episode in a single word : " Meh . "

The plot which involved Rachel and Kurt attracted uniformly favorable reviews . Fallon called it " one of the episode 's strongest subplots " , and Salon.com 's Matt Zoller Seitz deemed it the episode 's " most successful and affecting . " Bell named Rachel and Kurt as her favorite Glee pairing , and Futterman wrote that their " friendship has grown from something catty into something genuine and relatable and their interactions are likely the most authentic for any aspiring musical theater performers among Glee 's viewers . " Within his generally negative review of the episode , VanDerWerff noted that the NYADA mixer scene " features some of the best work Chris Colfer and Lea Michele have contributed to the show . " In contrast , the adult storylines were generally poorly received . Zoller Seitz branded Will and Emma 's relationship boring , and Abby West of Entertainment Weekly disliked the fact the season began with them in an established relationship : " I feel like I missed a huge leap for Emma and we need to have it acknowledged . " Fallon disparaged Will as being " insufferable " , and attributed this to " Morrison 's wooden characterization , the stilted writing [ and ] the flat purpose that the character serves on the show " . Sue 's storyline was described as nonsensical by VanDerWerff , who wrote that she " has decided to take her crusade against the glee club to a congressional district @- @ wide audience , because , well , she was the most popular character in season one , and she will be again , via blunt force , if necessary . " Reiter , however , found Sue to be " in perfect form in this episode , neither too mean nor too misty " , and enjoyed her storyline .

The introduction of Harmony and Sugar garnered critical praise . VanDerWerff wrote that the former " may be the best new character ever " , TVLine 's Michael Slezak said she was " brilliantly brought to life " by Pearce , and Fallon felt that her arrival boded well for the introductions of the other finalists from The Glee Project . He said that " she brought , which the best new characters do , fresh and exciting aspects in the show 's established leads . Zoller Seitz described Sugar as " an entitled little snot " , but a " great character " nonetheless , and one he hoped to see more of . West praised Lengies ' performance and opined that with Sue otherwise occupied , " it 'll be great to have another person as a thorn in the Glee club 's side . " Not everyone was thrilled with Sugar 's advent , however ; VanDerWerff called the character " awful " .

= = = Music and performances = = =

The episode 's musical numbers were generally well received . Hankinson appreciated that they " felt to proper scale " , with a realism which the previous season 's " over @- @ the @- @ top "

performances lacked . Though Benigno criticized the song selection for being too focused on Broadway tracks , which he felt limited its appeal for younger viewers , Urban called the choices " outstanding " and VanDerWerff commented that the wide range represented progress from season two . He noted that there were no performances he disliked , but found some " shockingly poorly motivated for dramatic purposes " . Canning enjoyed the songs both vocally and visually : " Everything was upbeat , familiar and fun . The dancing was entertaining and most of the performances were group numbers , which added plenty of visual flair . "

" We Got the Beat " garnered praise for Brittany and Mike 's dancing from Lee , though she described the vocals as AutoTuned , a comment echoed by Futterman , who was nevertheless glad that Brittany and Rachel " match [ ed ] the rawness of Santana 's voice " . Slezak and Benigno were pleased that Morris and Rivera received lead vocals , but while the former commended the number as a great musical start to the season and awarded it an " A " grade , the latter found it hard to differentiate between the Glee cover and the original , observed that it failed to advance the plot , and graded it " C " . Respers France was entirely unimpressed with the routine . For her , Sugar 's scene following it was one of the episode 's few highlights , although she described Sugar as having " a horrible voice " .

Rachel and Kurt 's duet of " Ding @-@ Dong ! The Witch Is Dead " made Billboard 's Rae Votta long for them to share more material . It encapsulated everything Futterman wanted in a duet between the two ; she observed " it 's effortless , charming , full of power musical theater vocals and Rachel gets to channel Barbra Streisand " . Lee , however , felt the number was an odd choice to demonstrate their talent , and although Slezak graded it a " B " , he contrasted it negatively with their previous duets . West opined that the song was too insubstantial and gave it a " B ? " . Its highest grade , an " A ? " , came from Benigno . He noted its lack of significance to the plot and wished that the vocal split had not been so strongly in Michele 's favor , but called it " a fun , infectious number . "

Criss 's performance of " It 's Not Unusual " attracted comparisons to comical renditions of the number in The Fresh Prince of Bel Air , but earned an " A " from West regardless . Fallon said the routine was " embarrassingly enjoyable " and lauded Criss 's screen presence , and Benigno called it a " wonderful performance " , but felt it was hampered by the simplicity of the arrangement and gave it a " B + " . Futterman and Slezak both generally like Blaine as a lead vocalist , but felt the song was not his best : Futterman wrote that " some of the belting felt strained and the energy a little forced " , and Slezak awarded the song a " B ? " .

The " Anything Goes " / " Anything You Can Do " mash @-@ up was widely acclaimed . Respers France named Pearce 's performance the best moment of the episode , and found that the character positively reminded her of " Glee of old " . The song was also a favorite of Lee 's , who wrote that the intensity of the actress was perfectly matched to the character 's disposition . West , Slezak and Benigno gave the performance an " A " ; the former called it an " outstanding rendition " which " felt like it belonged on a big stage or in a big @-@ screen musical " , and the latter two praised her vocal talent , which Benigno deemed unequalled on Glee . Futterman and Bell found Harmony a credible rival to Rachel vocally , and eagerly anticipated future competition between them . Urban called Pearce 's performance merely " serviceable " . Though she felt her acting was a weak point , she compared her favorably to season two guest star Charice and praised her vocals . Criticism came from New York 's Lindy West , who did not understand Rachel 's humiliation , as New Directions " sing way more elaborate and equally competent arrangements four to five times an episode " . She elaborated , " This is a thing that drives me crazy about Glee . As a viewer , there 's no knowing whether a performance was ' good ' like ' Anything Goes , ' or ' bad ' like ' We 've Got the Beat , ' until Rachel starts crying or some cheerleader starts throwing spaghetti . "

" You Can 't Stop the Beat " was called a " perfect ending to a perfect season premiere " by Mullins . Futterman described it as a " standard Glee episode finale , full of inspiration and importance for the future , and catchy as all hell . " Slezak enjoyed Rachel 's slow opening verse , said the full performance " felt a lot like the shiny , happy Glee of yore " and gave it an " A ? " as did Benigno , who also found it a typical final number but was less enthused by the familiarity . Votta 's only disappointment with the rendition was that the televised version did not include the " adorable duet "

between Kurt and Artie that is present on the single .

== Chart history ==

Three of the five cover versions released as singles debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 : " It 's Not Unusual " at number sixty @-@ five with 40 @,@ 000 in sales , " You Can 't Stop The Beat " at number sixty @-@ seven , and " We 've Got the Beat " at number eighty @-@ three . On the Canadian Hot 100 , " You Can 't Stop The Beat " charted highest at number sixty @-@ five , with " It 's Not Unusual " at number seventy @-@ five , and " We 've Got the Beat " at number eighty @-@ three . Neither " Ding @-@ Dong ! The Witch Is Dead " nor the " Anything Goes " / " Anything You Can Do " mash @-@ up charted on the Hot 100 in either country , though in the US each track sold 21 @,@ 000 downloads , and were in second and third place respectively on the Hot 100 " Bubbling Under " chart . Total US sales for the five cover versions were 149 @,@ 000 , compared to 409 @,@ 000 in sales for the five singles from the season two opener , " Audition " , in their first week ; for that episode , all five singles made the Hot 100 , and charted between numbers twenty @-@ one and fifty @-@ one .