

= Alive and Schticking =

" Alive and Schticking " is the season premiere of the American television series Will & Grace 's eighth season . It was written by Bill Wrubel and directed by series producer James Burrows . The episode was broadcast live on NBC in the United States on September 29 , 2005 , and was performed twice by the actors that evening for the East and West coasts . Alec Baldwin guest starred in " Alive and Schticking " and received an Emmy Award nomination for his performance .

In the episode , Grace ( Debra Messing ) contemplates having an affair with a married man , while Jack ( Sean Hayes ) begins a new career as the host of his new talk show Jack Talk . Meanwhile , Will ( Eric McCormack ) tries to hide from Karen ( Megan Mullally ) the fact that her husband , Stan , is alive and faked his death due to troubles with the mob . Will also tries to stop his former boss , Malcolm ( Baldwin ) , from dating Karen .

Will & Grace creators and executive producers David Kohan and Max Mutchnick were in favor of doing a live episode , and Kevin Reilly , who at the time served as NBC Entertainment President , thought it would be a good way to inaugurate the final season of the show . Since airing , " Alive and Schticking " has received mostly positive reviews from television critics , who enjoyed watching the mistakes made by the actors and their attempts to hide their laughter during the live broadcast . The episode acquired a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 81 and garnered the series ' highest rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic since February 17 , 2005 , and biggest overall viewer total since February 24 , 2005 .

= = Plot = =

Will ( Eric McCormack ) reveals to Grace ( Debra Messing ) that Karen 's ( Megan Mullally ) husband Stan is still alive . He learned this from his former boss , Malcolm ( Alec Baldwin ) , a secret agent , who told him that Stan is now living under seclusion and faked his death because of troubles with the mob . Will makes Grace promise that she keep this information to herself , but she breaks the promise and tells Jack ( Sean Hayes ) . When Malcolm later visits Will at his apartment and warns him to not to tell people about Stan 's predicament , Karen and Rosario ( Shelley Morrison ) also arrive . At meeting Karen , Malcolm becomes fond of her , as does Karen of him , even asking him out on a date , to which he accepts . Will , however , tells Malcolm that he cannot date Karen because Malcolm is still protecting Stan from the mob .

Meanwhile , Grace and Jack are discussing their own problems . Grace uses Jack 's promiscuous history with married men as a legitimate reason to have an affair with a married man , but Jack tells her to forget about it as both of them are the moral role models to their friends . After being honest with her , Jack confesses that the reason he is wearing an eye patch is not because he got glitter in his eye , as he told his friends . When he refused to stop his singing performance during the debut of his new talk show , Jack Talk , even though the entire set had accidentally been set on fire , his eyebrow was burnt off . Later , Will , Grace , and Jack all decide that it would be for the best to let Karen know the truth about Stan . Will breaks the news to her , but Karen believes he is joking . Rosario tells Karen that Stan is not dead , as she has been giving him reports on Karen . At the admission , Karen fires Rosario and leaves Will 's apartment with Malcolm , explaining that Stan may be alive , but that he is still dead to her .

= = Production = =

" Alive and Schticking " was written by Bill Wrubel and directed by series producer James Burrows . In July 2005 , it was announced by the National Broadcasting Company ( NBC ) that Will & Grace 's season premiere for season eight would be performed live . It was also confirmed that actor Alec Baldwin would appear in the episode . This was Baldwin 's third appearance , as he guest starred in two episodes from season seven , playing Will 's boss . His initial decision to do the show was to work with Megan Mullally , who plays Karen ; " I just love Megan . And so I said , ' Well , if you let me do it with Megan . ' And they said ' You got it . ' So I went and did that with them for four [

episodes ] . It was fun . For me now , it 's about who I work with . "

Will & Grace creators and executive producers David Kohan and Max Mutchnick were in favor of doing a live episode ; " We love the idea of a live episode because we get to show the audience of Will & Grace what we 've known from day one ? we work with the best cast in network television , " said Mutchnick . He noted that the live element would allow the writers to make changes in the script right up until the airing of the episode . Kevin Reilly , who at the time served as NBC Entertainment President , said the " challenging live platform launch " for Will & Grace would be a good way for the show to inaugurate its final season . In discussion of the episode , Burrows , the director of all Will & Grace episodes , commented : " This will be like the classic golden era of television that I was weaned on , where the audience sees everything . Directing a live broadcast will be a first for me , and as long as I have been in the business , there are very few firsts . "

Upon learning about the live telecast , the cast had mixed emotions . Sean Hayes , who plays Jack , was nervous about the episode and hoped there would be cue cards . Debra Messing ( Grace ) " gasped loudly " when it was revealed that the technical demands of live television would mean that Burrows would not be directing on the stage floor , but would be up in a booth instead . Messing noted that she had never done live television , but in regards to the live broadcast , said , " It starts out our final season in a real special way . " Eric McCormack ( Will ) was intrigued about the idea and seemed to be ready for whatever happened ; " It keeps it interesting for us . It stirs it up . It gives us a new way to do it . "

Mullally revealed that the show 's writing team was " notorious for tinkering with the script 's laugh lines " , even during the actual taping of the episodes . She hoped they would resist that urge for the live episode . Messing , however , was sure that the writers would interfere during the broadcasts ; " I have a gut feeling that , like , 10 minutes before we go they 'll be like , ' Oh , no , no , you know what ? Change this line to this . Now we 're locked ? go . ' " Prior to the live episode , the cast had shot the second , third and fourth episodes of the season . Shortly before this episode , Mullally injured her foot and was unable to walk without crutches . The writers therefore had to put Mullally 's character , Karen , in a cast and a motorized scooter , ostensibly because the character was recovering from an operation to correct a webbed toe .

" Alive and Schticking " was performed live twice for viewers in the East and West coasts , with different jokes for each broadcast . The first show was broadcast at 8 : 30 p.m. ( ET ) for the East ( this feed also aired live at 7 : 30 p.m. in the Central Time Zone ) and the second three hours later at 11 : 30 p.m. ET ( 8 : 30pm PT ) for the West . During the two performances , Messing and Hayes had " attacks of the giggles " . An audience member who was in attendance commented that Messing and Hayes " were so bad at keeping a straight face " during a dress rehearsal that Burrows had to get on the show 's PA system to yell at them . After both telecasts were aired , Burrows revealed that McCormack , Messing , Hayes , Mullally , and Baldwin " had a ball , but they also dreaded it . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Alive and Schticking " was watched by 9 @. @ 81 million households , according to Nielsen ratings . The episode received a 4 @. @ 4 rating / 11 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic . It also scored the series ' highest 18 ? 49 rating since February 17 , 2005 , and biggest overall viewer total since February 24 , 2005 . " Alive and Schticking " finished 21st in the weekly ratings for the week of September 26 ? October 2 , 2005 . In 2006 , Baldwin was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award in the " Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series " category for this episode .

" Alive and Schticking " received positive reviews . Fort Worth Star @- @ Telegram contributor Robert Philpot , who gave the episode a B + rating , thought it was a pleasant surprise and an indication that there " might be some life " left in the show . He added that the episode feels fresher because of the " rapid @- @ fire dialogue , farcical situations and ubiquitous double @- @ entendres . And although this live edition was inarguably a stunt , it did prove that real people ? and not mere machines ? laugh at the characters and the jokes . " Sal Cinquemani of Slant Magazine also noted

that the episode showed that Will & Grace still had a bit of life left . He added that McCormack seemed to flourish under the pressure , and that Hayes and Mullally " were given free rein to flex their Jack and Karen [ ... ] " . Dana Stevens of Slate magazine reported that " Alive and Schticking " offered a chance to punch up the show with some " unusually broad sight gags . " She wrote that the real reason to watch the episode were the mistakes made by the actors .

Philpot continued that moments like Will and his boss making out recalled the show 's " glory days " , and Messing 's trouble keeping a straight face " brought back fond memories of Tim Conway cracking up Harvey Korman on The Carol Burnett Show . " Knoxville News Sentinel 's writer Terry Morrow also commented that the episode reminded him of The Carol Burnett Show because of its " goofiness and by @-@ the @-@ seat @-@ of @-@ its @-@ pants style . " Morrow added that the episode made him laugh more than any other sitcom on network television . Jeffrey Kauffman of DVD Talk praised Baldwin for his performance and commented that " Alive and Schticking " helped " jumpstart the series creatively after a couple of seasons " and " It 's fun [ ... ] to see the actors momentarily break character , a la The Carol Burnett Show , where the absurdity of certain situations ( usually involving Jack and / or Karen ) makes giggling all but impossible . " Entertainment Weekly television critic Gary Susman gave " Alive and Schticking " four stars , while Frazier Moore of the Associated Press lauded it as a " fun , and attention @-@ grabbing , note . " The Hollywood Reporter 's Ray Richmond said " In hindsight , this live thing proved a good idea . "

" Alive and Schticking " received less positive reviews as well . Gail Pennington of the St. Louis Post @-@ Dispatch wrote that the live episode " proved once and for all that Will & Grace should have been buried before now , " and Jeffrey Robinson of DVD Talk pointed out that its underlying storyline " is a little too over @-@ the @-@ top . " Jessica Banov of the The Fayetteville Observer wrote , " The first live show ... was so @-@ so . The lighting was weird , and I 'm not sure what was up with Debra Messing 's hair . But it was funny to see Messing and Sean Hayes break from their scripts to giggle . " Cinquemani commented that Baldwin 's " absurd " role as Malcolm " is proving to be one of Will & Grace 's most enduring guest stars . " David Blum of The New York Sun reported that the producers of Will & Grace wasted Baldwin 's " prodigious talents on a supporting role this past season , when it 's clear he could effortlessly carry his own network series . " Kauffman concluded that Grace 's joke about George Bush being brain dead " just falls amazingly flat " .