

= Ten Sessions =

" Ten Sessions " is the 13th episode of the third season of *How I Met Your Mother* , and the 57th episode overall of the series . It originally aired on March 24 , 2008 on CBS . The episode was written by series co @-@ creators Carter Bays and Craig Thomas , and directed by Pamela Fryman . In the episode , Ted is repeatedly rejected by his dermatologist Stella for a date , so Stella 's receptionist , Abby , becomes interested in him .

In March 2008 , it was announced that American recording artist Britney Spears would make a guest appearance on the show as Abby . Alongside Spears , " Ten Sessions " featured guest appearances from Sarah Chalke and Marshall Manesh . Television critics reacted positively to the episode , who praised the storyline and Spears ' performance . According to the Nielsen ratings , " Ten Sessions " was watched by 10 @.@ 62 million viewers , which was the show 's highest rating for the third season of the series .

= = Plot = =

Ted (Josh Radnor) is at the clinic to remove his tattoo , where he is attracted to his doctor , Stella (Sarah Chalke) . They agree to go to a movie , *Plan 9 from Outer Space* , but Ted does not realize Stella had brought her friends along with her , and it was not a date . At the next session , Ted suggests waiting till his ten sessions are over before asking her out , but Stella tells him she will still say no . Ted still feels that over ten weeks , she will start to like him , so decides to keep trying . Even though the first five sessions go well , Stella confirms her answer is still no . Ted decides that being nice to the receptionist , Abby (Britney Spears) , would be a good way to let Stella see his good side , but instead , Abby starts to show interest in him . Upset that this didn 't work , Ted tries using a self @-@ help book he saw in Stella 's clinic . When he tries talking to her about this , she reveals it isn 't her book , and she detests it , while Abby confirms that Ted was reading the book in the reception .

Robin (Cobie Smulders) suggests Ted give up on Stella and instead focus on Abby . Barney (Neil Patrick Harris) agrees , as he made an appointment with Stella to check what she was like , and discovered she had a condition where she is only attracted to men with mustaches . Although Ted does not believe him , he still tries to grow a mustache , which Stella laughs at (a year earlier , Barney had made a ten @-@ dollar bet with Ted that he could get him to grow a mustache) . Upset , Ted says he gives up , but Lily (Alyson Hannigan) tells him to try again , as Stella is interested in him , though she says she has not been to see her . It is then revealed that Marshall (Jason Segel) had gone to see Stella to talk up Ted , and found out Stella had a crush on him . Happy that Stella is interested in him , Ted asks her out after his last session , but she says she does not have time for dating because she has a daughter .

After a while , Ted realizes she didn 't actually say the word ' no ' , just that she didn 't have time , and so decides to take her out on a " two @-@ minute date " - to dinner at a table at the café next door to her practice and " the important parts " of *Manos : The Hands of Fate* at the electronics store two doors down , with help from Ranjit (Marshall Manesh) . The date goes well , and Stella promises to call if she ever has time . Finally , Abby sees Ted outside the clinic holding flowers he tried to give to Stella , and chases him down the street . She is then seen at the reception telling Barney about how he toyed with her emotions , after which they go out to have sex .

= = Production = =

" Ten Sessions " was written by series co @-@ creators Carter Bays and Craig Thomas , and directed by Pamela Fryman . In early March 2008 , it was confirmed that singer Britney Spears would guest star on the show . Neil Patrick Harris was " shocked " that Spears was willing to " come and do some acting " , noting that she had not acted in a while . Spears 's last acting role was on *Will & Grace* in 2006 . Harris told *Entertainment Tonight* that the paparazzi would not be a problem , since the show is shot on the Fox secure lot . Before Sarah Chalke was given the role as Stella ,

Alicia Silverstone was originally set to guest star , but dropped out when her representatives feared she would be " overshadowed " by Spears . Co @-@ creators Carter Bays and Craig Thomas " love " Silverstone and hoped she would eventually guest star on the show , although she never did .

Alyson Hannigan said that Spears " was so funny " and that she had " no idea she [Spears] had such great comic timing " . According to Jason Segel , Spears improvised a few lines that were " really good " and set " everyone laughing " . Spears was nominated for a People 's Choice Award in the Favorite Scene @-@ Stealing Guest Star category for her performance in the episode . " Ten Sessions " first aired on CBS in the United States on March 24 , 2008 . Spears 's wardrobe in the episode was put up for an online auction to benefit the Natural Resources Defense Council . The auction began just after the episode aired and would be going on for a week . The yellow Nanette Lepore lace dress Spears wore in the episode was sold for US \$ 1 @,@ 525 , and the embroidered rust dress was sold for US \$ 1 @,@ 925 .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast in the United States , " Ten Sessions " was watched by 10 @.@ 62 million viewers according to the Nielsen ratings . It attracted 1 million more viewers than the previous episode , and 2 @.@ 4 million more than the show 's average before the writer 's strike . The episode achieved a 4 @.@ 5 / 12 rating in the key 18 ? 49 demographic among adults , and was the fourth highest @-@ rated show of the evening ; it subsequently achieved the show 's highest rating ever in the 18 ? 49 demographic . Show co @-@ creator Bays later said that Britney Spears ' appearance greatly benefited ratings : " And by golly she put our show on the map . It can 't be overstated . Britney Spears rescued us from ever being on the bubble again . Thanks Britney ! "

Spears ' appearance was critically acclaimed by most critics . Linda Stasi of the New York Post asserted that Spears looked " slim [...] trim and gorgeous " and that " her acting was nothing short of adorably believable " . Stasi concluded that Spears ' cameo was the highlight of " Ten Sessions " . David Hinckley of New York Daily News echoed similar sentiments , avouching that she " proved [that] she can act every bit as well as she can sing " . Michelle Zoromski of IGN argued however that while Spears ' appearance was a " nice change of pace from her latest public appearances " , it was nonetheless a " bit clunky and not as seamless as other guest roles have been on the show " . Donna Bowman of The A.V. Club was also less enthusiastic about the singer 's performance . Bowman opined : " The Big Britney Episode , as it will henceforth be known , wasn 't really much to get all huffy over . You can say this for the [How I Met Your Mother] team : They tend to minimize the annoyance factor of their special guest stars . Britney was a sideshow , and she got her couple of laughs , but she didn 't hog the screen time . "

Similarly , " Ten Sessions " as a whole was well received by television critics . Bowman gave the episode a ' B ' grade , and was more critical of " Ten Sessions " . She expressed : " the timing wasn 't spot @-@ on all the way through ' Ten Sessions ' . The episode was slow starting , and as with many of the series ' ' Ted is a master of romance ' attempts , the two @-@ minute date seemed as likely to be annoying @-@ quirky as endearing @-@ quirky , if you were the one being wooed . I wanted to like it more than I did . Maybe it almost works because Elliot on Scrubs would have really liked it , ditzy romantic that she is . But no ? it 's just an ounce heavy on the trying @-@ too @-@ hard scale . " In contrast , Zoromski gave the episode an 8 @.@ 9 out of ten , signifying a " great " rating . He thought that the episode was superior to the previous episode , adding that the show returned to full form .