

= Extra Large Medium =

" Extra Large Medium " is the 12th episode of the eighth season of the animated comedy series Family Guy . Directed by John Holmquist and written by Steve Callaghan , the episode originally aired on Fox in the United States on February 14 , 2010 . In " Extra Large Medium " , the show 's main character , Peter , discovers that he has supposedly developed " extrasensory perception " ( ESP ) after his two sons , Chris and Stewie , go missing during a family hike in the woods . Soon after being rescued , Chris decides to ask out a classmate at his school , named Ellen , who has Down syndrome , and eventually takes her on a romantic date , which he goes on to regret . Meanwhile , Peter begins performing psychic readings , but is eventually discovered to be faking his ability once he is approached by the town 's police force .

The episode generated significant controversy . Former Governor of Alaska and 2008 Republican vice @-@ presidential nominee Sarah Palin , who is referenced briefly in the episode as being the mother of Ellen , took offense to the episode 's portrayal of Down syndrome , due to her son 's diagnosis of the disorder . Andrea Fay Friedman , who was also diagnosed with Down syndrome and portrayed the character of Ellen , publicly refuted Palin , instead supporting executive producer and series creator Seth MacFarlane , who defended the episode , and was also supported by Bill Maher , the host of Real Time . The episode got more criticism from the Parents Television Council during its original broadcast .

Despite the controversy , critical responses to the episode were mostly positive ; critics praised its storyline , numerous cultural references , and its portrayal of a person with Down syndrome . According to Nielsen ratings , it was viewed in 6 @.@ 42 million homes in its original airing . The episode featured guest performances by Jennifer Birmingham , Jackson Douglas , Andrea Fay Friedman , Phil LaMarr , Michele Lee and Nana Visitor , along with several recurring guest voice actors for the series . It was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics , for the episode 's song entitled " Down Syndrome Girl " , at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards . Both Walter Murphy and MacFarlane were recognized for their work on the music and lyrics . " Extra Large Medium " was released on DVD , along with 11 other episodes from the season , on December 13 , 2011 .

= = Plot = =

When the Griffin family decide to go for a hike in the local woods , Chris and Stewie get lost while chasing after a floating butterfly . As a result , they go missing for several days , with only limited supplies . As Lois is at her wits ' end , she decides to see a psychic medium who assures her of the children 's safety and well being . Eventually the boys are found and rescued by Bruce , and returned to their home in Quahog which only furthers Lois 's psychic obsession to the annoyance of a skeptical Brian . In defiance of Lois 's assertion that extrasensory perception exists , Brian has Peter perform a cold reading on a passerby in the park in order to demonstrate that psychic readings are purely an act , and not real . However , Peter is struck by his success as a medium , convincing himself that he actually has extrasensory perception , and decides to capitalize on it by opening his own psychic readings business and performing in front of a live audience . Soon after , Peter 's bluff is finally called when Joe requests his help in a frantic search for a missing person who has been strapped to a bomb . Peter stalls for time during the search ( as he just wants to feel the victim 's daughter 's breasts ) , eventually resulting in a gruesome death when the bomb explodes , prompting Peter to flatly admit that he actually has no psychic powers whatsoever .

Meanwhile , during the time when Chris and Stewie were lost in the woods , Chris promises to ask out Ellen , a school classmate with Down syndrome . After their rescue , Stewie helps prepare Chris for a date by dressing him up , and instructing him on how to act through a prolonged musical number . During the date , Ellen turns out to be pushy and demanding , and the relationship quickly falls apart . Chris admits that he had bought into a stereotype of people with Down syndrome being kind and loving , and breaks up with her . Stewie consoles Chris by congratulating him for overcoming his shyness and demonstrating confidence in asking her out on a date , as he had

promised to do .

= = Production and development = =

The episode was directed by series regular John Holmquist , and written by series show runner Steve Callaghan before the conclusion of the eighth production season . Series regulars Peter Shin and James Purdum served as supervising directors , with Seth MacFarlane and David Zuckerman working as staff writers for the episode . Composer Walter Murphy , who has worked on the series since its inception , returned to compose the music for " Extra Large Medium " .

Actress Andrea Fay Friedman , who was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth , and who has appeared on several television shows , including Saving Grace and Life Goes On , voiced the character Ellen . Before performing on the show , Friedman stated in an interview that she had never watched Family Guy , but found it to be " funny " after watching several episodes from the series . In developing Friedman 's character , her physical appearance was largely used in creating Ellen , in addition to adding a " bossy " personality to the character , which Friedman was reluctant to perform at first . She eventually " had a nice time " performing the script , however , as it was her first voice acting performance .

" Extra Large Medium " , along with the eleven other episodes from the first half of Family Guy 's eighth season , was released on a three @-@ disc DVD set in the United States on December 13 , 2011 . The sets include brief audio commentaries by various crew and cast members for several episodes , a collection of deleted scenes and animatics , a special mini @-@ feature which discussed the process behind animating " And Then There Were Fewer " , a mini @-@ feature entitled " The Comical Adventures of Family Guy ? Brian & Stewie : The Lost Phone Call " , and footage of the Family Guy panel at the 2010 San Diego Comic @-@ Con International .

In addition to the regular cast , voice actress Jennifer Birmingham , actor Jackson Douglas , Andrea Fay Friedman , voice actor Phil LaMarr , singer Michele Lee , and actress Nana Visitor guest starred in the episode . Recurring guest voice actors Lori Alan , writer Danny Smith , writer Alec Sulkin and writer John Viener also made minor appearances . Recurring guest voice actors Patrick Warburton and Adam West made guest appearances as well .

= = Cultural references = =

Peter mentions starring in Starlight Express , which is a rock musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber ; although Peter 's role as shown onscreen has little to do with the actual performance . While Stewie and Chris are lost in the forest overnight , Stewie plays a guessing game with one of the answers being Thornton Melon . Stewie looks at the television audience wondering why the majority of them chose Thornton Melon , then Stewie notes that Thornton Melon was the character that Rodney Dangerfield played in the 1986 film Back to School . It was in fact a quote by Henry David Thoreau . Stewie 's reference to a newspaper headline saying " Stewie Defeats Truman " is a takeoff of the famous " Dewey Defeats Truman " headline , which erroneously predicted that Thomas E. Dewey would defeat Harry S. Truman in the 1948 presidential election . Peter 's new career as a psychic is a parody of John Edward and his TV series Crossing Over . While the police depend on Peter to help them find someone , Peter stalls by pretending to channel the spirit of Lou Costello ; his exchange with Joe about the missing man , Mr. Hu who lives on First Street , is a takeoff of the famous Abbott and Costello routine " Who 's on First ? " . Also , there was a cutaway to the Enterprise from the original Star Trek series showing Spock winning the lottery ( with the numbers 18 , 24 , 41 and 72 ) , then cussing at everyone shortly before leaving . Nana Visitor voices the Enterprise viewscreen , while series writer and producer John Viener voices Spock in the cutaway .

= = Reception = =

" Extra Large Medium " was broadcast on February 14 , 2010 in the United States as part of the animation television night on Fox . It was preceded by an episode of The Simpsons , and Family

Guy creator and executive producer Seth MacFarlane 's spin @-@ off , The Cleveland Show . It was followed by MacFarlane 's second show American Dad ! . The episode was viewed by an estimated 6 @. @ 42 million viewers , according to the Nielsen ratings , despite airing simultaneously with the 2010 Winter Olympics on NBC , Undercover Boss on CBS and Extreme Makeover : Home Edition on ABC . The episode also acquired a 3 @. @ 2 / 8 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic beating The Simpsons , The Cleveland Show and American Dad ! , in addition to significantly edging out all three shows in total viewership . The episode 's ratings were slightly up from the previous episode , " Dial Meg for Murder " .

Reviews of the episode were positive , citing the episode as " a pleasant surprise . " In a simultaneous review of the episodes of The Simpsons and American Dad ! that preceded and followed the episode respectively and The Cleveland Show , Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club commented that he felt that the Chris plot line was " hung together in a way the storylines usually don 't on this show , " adding that , " I 'll give the show points for both degree of difficulty and pulling off something I didn 't think it would . " In the conclusion of his review , VanDerWerff rated the episode as a B- , beating only The Cleveland Show episode " Buried Pleasure " . In a slightly less positive review , Ramsey Isler of IGN gave the episode a 7 @. @ 7 out of 10 , and began his assessment of the episode by stating , " This one will certainly get some politically correct Down syndrome advocates all riled up , but Family Guy is nothing without a little controversy . " Isler went on to call the plot " uneven in quality , " but with " some moments that could be in the Family Guy " greatest hits " archive . " Television critic Jason Hughes of the TV Squad called the Abbott and Costello joke " hilariously appropriate " , and stated that the episode 's portrayal of a person with Down syndrome was " refreshing . "

= = = Controversy = = =

At one point , Ellen states that her mother is the former Governor of Alaska , which strongly implies that her mother is Sarah Palin , the only woman to have served in the office of governor in the state . Palin 's daughter Bristol publicly stated on her mother 's Facebook profile on February 16 , 2010 , that she took offense to the episode , feeling that it mocked her brother , Trig , who has Down syndrome , commenting , " If the writers of a particularly pathetic cartoon show thought they were being clever in mocking my brother and my family yesterday , they failed . All they proved is that they 're heartless jerks . " Sarah Palin also criticized the episode in an appearance on The O 'Reilly Factor , calling those who made the show " cruel , cold @-@ hearted people . " The writer of the episode , Steve Callaghan , addressed Palin 's criticism of the episode at the San Diego Comic @-@ Con International on July 24 , 2010 , in talking about the upcoming ninth season of the show , stating , " This season , I decided that I 'd even things out and write something that would offend smart people . "

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times , Seth MacFarlane responded to Palin 's criticism , saying that the series always uses satire as the basis of its humor , and that the show is an " equal @-@ opportunity offender . " In addition , Andrea Fay Friedman , who voiced Ellen , and who herself has Down syndrome , also responded to the criticisms saying that the joke was aimed at Sarah Palin and not her son , and that " former Governor Palin does not have a sense of humor . " In a subsequent interview , Friedman rebuked Palin , accusing her of using her son , Trig , as a political prop to pander for votes , saying that she has a normal life and that Palin 's son should be treated as normal , rather than like a " loaf of French bread . " Later , MacFarlane addressed both Palin 's statement and Friedman 's rebuttal in an appearance on Real Time with Bill Maher calling Palin 's outrage a presumptuous attempt to defend people with Down syndrome , and characterizing Friedman 's statement as her way of saying that she does not need feigned pity from Palin . Family Guy cast member Patrick Warburton stated that he objected to the joke , saying , " I know that you have to be an equal @-@ opportunity offender , but there are some things that I just don 't think are funny . " While frequent MacFarlane critic Parents Television Council touched on the Palin controversy in its assessment of the episode , the rest of the show 's content ? which contained " mean @-@ spirited pot @-@ shots , explicit language , and strong sexual content " ? earned the

watchdog group 's " Worst TV Show of the Week " title . The PTC specifically cited the Broadway @-@ style song , which the PTC said " contained all the stereotypes of mental retardation " and " disturbing sexual references , " and the climatic scene in the subplot , where Peter pretends to be a psychic , which the PTC said also contained sexual humor .

On July 8 , 2010 , the episode 's song entitled " Down Syndrome Girl " was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Music and Lyrics at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards . Series creator Seth MacFarlane and composer Walter Murphy were nominated for their work on the song 's lyrics and music . On July 24 , 2010 , MacFarlane gave a live performance of the song at the 2010 San Diego Comic @-@ Con International , to an audience of nearly 4 @, @ 200 attendees . At the Creative Arts Awards on August 21 , 2010 , " Down Syndrome Girl " lost to the USA Network series Monk .