

= It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! =

" It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " is the 23rd episode of the eighth season , and the 175th episode overall , of the American animated television series SpongeBob SquarePants . It originally aired on CBS in the United States on November 23 , 2012 , and on Nickelodeon on December 6 . In the special , Plankton tries to convince SpongeBob to transform everybody in Bikini Bottom into jerks by feeding them his special jerktonium @-@ laced fruitcakes in order to get his Christmas wish ? the Krabby Patty secret formula .

The episode was produced in stop motion animation at Screen Novelties , and was directed by Mark Caballero and Seamus Walsh , two of the founders of the company . The animation style was inspired by those of the classic Rankin / Bass television specials . Written by Luke Brookshier , Marc Ceccarelli , Derek Iversen , and Mr. Lawrence , " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " was based on Tom Kenny and Andy Paley 's 2009 song " Don 't Be a Jerk (It 's Christmas) " , which was also featured in the episode . John Goodman guest starred as the voice of Santa Claus . On November 6 , 2012 , the soundtrack album and the DVD for the episode were released simultaneously .

Upon premiere , " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " attracted nearly five million viewers and met positive critical reception . It received four nominations at the 40th Annie Awards including Best Animated Television Production for Children (with Dan Driscoll winning the Character Animation in an Animated Television or other Broadcast Venue Production category) . It was also nominated for Best Sound Editing in Television at the 60th Golden Reel Awards .

= = Plot summary = =

= = Patchy the Pirate 's Subplot = =

The special opens with Patchy the Pirate Driving a Mail truck through a snowy mountain area (and parodying the role of S. D. Kluger from Santa Claus is Comin ' to Town) with the intention of delivering his letter to Santa himself personally . He stops to wish the viewers a Merry Christmas , and explains that he wanted to make sure Santa Claus got his letter this year , so he has given the mailman the day off (or so he claims ; in actuality , it is revealed that he stole the truck and the mailman is tied up in the back of the truck) . His parrot , Potty , however , doubts that Patchy knows the way to the North Pole . As they debate which Christmas song contains the directions in its lyrics , the truck suddenly runs over a (literal) fork in the road , which gets stuck in one of the tires and causes the truck to spin out of control . As this happens , Patchy suggests they show the viewers what SpongeBob is up to this Christmas .

The mail truck then drives off a cliff , and crashes at the bottom of a canyon , but Patchy and Potty (and the mailman , still bound and gagged) manage to survive . Unfortunately , the Truck has a flat tire caused by the fork , preventing Patchy from being able to drive it any further , and he and Potty get lost in the woods and start a campfire . Out of a sense of hunger within over twenty minutes , Patchy hallucinates and imagines Potty as a platter of buffalo wings and nearly eats him , only to snap out of it . Potty then also hallucinates and imagines Patchy 's head as a Suet cake topped with birdseed and pecks on him .

In the special 's epilogue , Patchy and Potty find out that they 're at the North Pole , believing they finally made it to Santa 's workshop . Patchy goes inside to read his letter , which says that all he wants for Christmas is meet his hero , SpongeBob SquarePants . However , it is revealed to the viewers that Patchy is hallucinating and has actually wandered into a cave inhabited by a hungry polar bear who starts chasing him (and presumably nearly eats him) . Nearby , the real Santa puts Patchy on the naughty list for kidnapping the mailman , and stealing the mail truck in the first place earlier , and Potty agrees with him . The Patchy segments then end as they wish the viewers a merry Christmas .

These Segments are cut from special on CBS airings .

== Main Plot ==

It is Christmas in Bikini Bottom and Plankton is miserable and angry for committing so many naughty deeds , that he always gets puts on Santa 's naughty list , making him unable to receive his Christmas wish ? the Krusty Krab 's Krabby Patty secret formula . However , he discovers Jerktonium , a dangerous chemical element which serves as a trap for the citizens of Bikini Bottom and is capable of turning anyone into a jerk . He cooks it into fruitcakes that he intends to feed to all the Bikini Bottomites and turn them into jerks . In order to test it , Plankton gives SpongeBob a slice , but nothing seems to work on SpongeBob , who is immune to Jerktonium because of the combination of his tiny brain and his very big heart . Increasingly infuriated that his plan has seemingly failed completely to suffice , Plankton gives his fruitcake dispenser to SpongeBob , who promptly distributes the fruitcakes to all of Bikini Bottom and transforms all the residents into jerks . After realizing that the element works only on other people in Bikini Bottom instead and that SpongeBob is so full of Christmas spirit that he is immune to jerktonium , Plankton is forced to send out an evil wind @-@ up robot version of SpongeBob ? to commit troublesome deeds to frame the real SpongeBob .

The next day , SpongeBob begins to notice that everyone in town is behaving like jerks . SpongeBob and Sandy discover the antidote for Jerktonium to cure the residents in Bikini Bottom is a song called " Don 't Be a Jerk (It 's Christmas !) . " SpongeBob sings it , bringing back the residents ' Christmas spirit . Unfortunately , it is too late when Santa arrives and states that everyone is on his naughty list , except for Plankton , who is the only nice person there is , which has earned him the Krabby Patty formula . SpongeBob tries to convince Santa that this is all a mistake , but Santa refuses to believe him and states that he is in trouble for wreaking havoc in Bikini Bottom . The wind @-@ up robot comes to eliminate Santa and destroy more of Christmas , but SpongeBob fights the robot with the fruitcake dispenser and finally destroys it , clearing his name . Santa thanks SpongeBob for saving him , which shows that SpongeBob is good , but then he finds the robot 's wind @-@ up key by reading " If found , please return to the Chum Bucket , " revealing that Plankton was behind all the chaos , and punishes Plankton by giving him , yet again , a stocking of coal . Santa then leaves Bikini Bottom , only for Patrick Star to capture him in a butterfly net and throw him off @-@ course .

== Production ==

== Development , writing , and voice casting ==

Luke Brookshier , Marc Ceccarelli , Derek Iversen , and Mr. Lawrence served as the episode 's writers , with Brookshier and Ceccarelli serving as storyboard directors . " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " was based on the 2009 Christmas song " Don 't Be a Jerk (It 's Christmas) " written by SpongeBob 's voice actor Tom Kenny and his writing partner Andy Paley . They wrote it as " ... just sort of a little sample calling card of what we were thinking about . " The story of the song was conceived with the help of one of the episode 's writers Mr. Lawrence . Kenny explained , " ... Eventually somebody at Nickelodeon found it [the song] on their desk and decided to make it into a holiday special . " The network let Kenny and Paley write three more songs for the upcoming special episode (Nickelodeon eventually decided to release a soundtrack album , which became It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! Album , containing the songs to coincide with the episode) .

" It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " was the first full @-@ length episode of the series to be produced in stop motion animation . Mark Caballero , Seamus Walsh , and Christopher Finnegan animated it at Screen Novelties , while Caballero and Walsh served as the directors . Screen Novelties was chosen by the show 's executives to execute the animation because they had already worked with them before in other several smaller projects . These include the revamping of the opening title sequence of the show for 2009 's SpongeBob 's Truth or Square . Walsh explained , " They dug one of our shorts that we 'd done a while back , which was called Graveyard Jamboree with Mysterious

Mose , and wanted to have us apply our sensibilities to SpongeBob ... We come from the same planet as far as our sense of humor and comic sensibilities are concerned . But we also wanted to make sure that it felt like a SpongeBob episode . "

All the main SpongeBob SquarePants cast members lent their voices to the episode . Series executive producer Paul Tibbitt also had a minor speaking role as the voice of Potty the Parrot . In addition to the regular cast , American actor John Goodman guest starred in the episode as the voice of Santa Claus .

= = = Animation and filming = = =

The animators cited the classic television specials Rudolph the Red @-@ Nosed Reindeer and Santa Claus Is Comin ' to Town by Rankin / Bass Productions as inspirations for the episode 's animation styles . Caballero said , " Well , we are heavily immersed in that particular Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass style . They are big heroes of ours ... So we tapped into that knowledge for sure . We definitely use modern tricks , though . We shot everything with digital cameras directly to the hard drives of our iMacs . "

Production on the episode officially began in October 2011 at Los Angeles , California , after several months of research and development . The animators worked closely with executive producer Paul Tibbitt , creator Stephen Hillenburg , and creative director Vincent Waller to ensure the cartoon characters were properly translated into three @-@ dimensional puppets . Hillenburg and Tibbitt provided hands @-@ on feedback on the production on a weekly basis . " They 'd check out the weeklies and go back and forth with us on the various gags [...] It was really a pleasurable experience when they came to visit , because we come from the same planet . It all felt very easy and natural , " Walsh said .

About 30 people ? whom Walsh described " ... seemed to be thrilled to work on the show " ? worked on the making of the episode over at Screen Novelties . Walsh described the initial stage of production as " a very busy period for all of us ... We came in at about 8 : 30 in the morning and didn 't leave until midnight some days . But it all zipped by pretty quickly . " He said that they " felt pretty lucky because usually executives involved with productions look at the stop @-@ motion process as annoying , but on this special , they were very jazzed and gung @-@ go about it . " To keep the production crew in the Christmas spirit , six months worth of Christmas music was played , which included 83 versions of The Nutcracker suite . According to Finnegan , it took about five months to shoot .

= = = Set construction = = =

Caballero and Walsh had conflicts on making sure the stop motion version of Bikini Bottom will resemble the 2D world of the series . Caballero said that " We didn 't want to make exact sculptural copies of the cartoon drawings and layouts , just because it might 've ended up feeling too ' perfect ' or something . So we chose to re @-@ appropriate real world objects as much as possible . " Art director Kelly Mazurowski focused on " digging through salvage yards " , picking the right materials to be used in the set . Caballero described this process as " ' puppetizing ' the world of Bikini Bottom . "

Six sets were constructed on which 60 pounds of baking soda were used as snow (the crew tried to use real snow but it melted) , 42 pounds of glitter were used to cover the background , and 20 boxes of breakfast cereal were used to cover the coral rocks . Over 38 different types of foam were used to make the set pieces and the characters ' bodies and heads . To render SpongeBob 's pineapple house , palm fronds from a tree in a school yard were used . Other props and materials used were an actual starfish , three Christmas trees (for the Patchy the Pirate 's Winter Wonderland scenes) , six boxes of puff cereal (to create the fruitcake inside SpongeBob 's mouth) , 21 pounds of googly eyes (for rivets , texture pieces , knobs , etc .) , 22 pounds of woodchips (to create Sandy 's treedome floor) , and 24 bunches of craft flowers (to create the parade float) .

=== Character design ===

According to Caballero , SpongeBob was the most challenging character to translate to stop motion . It was so " ... just because of the sheer number of parts that needed to be made . We wanted to retain as much of that squashy @-@ stretchy goofiness as possible , so he had dozens of replacement parts , like arms , noses , even various sizes of cheeks and freckles . Of course , as the main character , you really want to make sure he will charm the audience , which brings a special kind of pressure . " Walsh said , " The most important thing is to capture the spirit of the character , not necessarily a literal copy of the 2D . Puppets have their own kind of energy and you have to be careful about what to include and what to leave out . " On the other hand , Patchy the Pirate became the easiest character to make " because he has the most humanoid proportions . "

== Release ==

=== Broadcast ===

A sneak @-@ peek trailer for the episode was released in June 2012 . On November 23 , 2012 , " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " officially aired on CBS . It also premiered in the United Kingdom and Ireland on December 2 , 2012 . On December 6 , 2012 , " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " aired on Nickelodeon in the United States , twelve years after the original airing of the first SpongeBob SquarePants Christmas special " Christmas Who ? " . According to Caballero , the decision to make the episode a CBS prime time special " came along later " and the crew " were stoked when we heard the news . " He said it may be because " most of the classic Christmas specials like Rudolph [the Red @-@ Nosed Reindeer] , Frosty [the Snowman] and A Charlie Brown Christmas air on that channel . To be included in that line up was far out ! "

=== Home media and other releases ===

" It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " was released on a DVD compilation of the same name on October 30 , 2012 in Canada and on November 6 , 2012 in the United States . The DVD features exclusive content including behind @-@ the @-@ scenes making of the special and interviews with the cast and crew , a pre @-@ color animatic , and yule log . The initial announcement of the DVD release stated that it would contain three Christmas specials from T.U.F.F. Puppy , Fanboy & Chum Chum , and The Fairly OddParents as bonus features ; however , these were dropped from the actual release . A Blu @-@ ray release was also announced , but was cancelled a week afterwards for unknown reasons ; however , on July 22 , 2013 , Paramount Home Media Distribution announced that the Blu @-@ ray would be released on October 15 , 2013 . " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " was released for digital download on October 31 , 2012 featuring over 30 minutes of exclusive behind the scenes footage , a sing along version of " Don 't Be a Jerk (It 's Christmas) , " and more . On March 12 , 2013 , " It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! " and other season 8 episodes were released on The Complete Eighth Season DVD .

== Reception ==

=== Ratings ===

In its original airing on CBS on November 23 , the episode was viewed by an estimated 3 @.@ 626 million households and received a 0 @.@ 9 Nielsen rating and a 3 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . On December 8 , Saturday , the airing of the episode on Nickelodeon drew 4 @.@ 8 million viewers making the special win its time period across all television and posted strong , double @-@ digit gains over last year with Kids 2 @-@ 11 (7 @.@ 8 / 2 @.@ 6 million , + 30 %) ,

Kids 6 @-@ 11 (7 @.@ 7 / 1 @.@ 5 million , + 45 %) , Teens 9 @-@ 14 (5 @.@ 7 / 1 @.@ 2 million , + 84 %) and Adults 18 @-@ 49 (1 @.@ 2 / 1 @.@ 3 million , + 33 %) . Nickelodeon closed the week as the most @-@ watched net in total day with kids 2 @-@ 11 (2 @.@ 8 / 936 @,@ 000) and total viewers (1 @.@ 8 million) . In the United Kingdom 273 @,@ 000 viewers watched the episode and 78 @,@ 000 viewers watched the timeshift broadcast . The broadcast in Canada received 835 @,@ 000 viewers , the 23rd highest of the week on all Canadian television . In Spain the premiere on December 20 , 2012 received 618 @,@ 000 viewers making it the 44th highest broadcast for that day .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The special episode received positive reviews from media critics . In his review for the Los Angeles Times , Robert Lloyd wrote , " I felt I 'd been somewhere , watching this . When it ended , I was not ready to leave . " David Hinckley of the New York Daily News wrote , " It 's enough to make you want to dream of a yellow Christmas . " Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club called the episode " cute , and goofy and doesn 't have a mean bone in its body . " Mark Frauenfelder of Boing Boing said that " ... they [the animators] perfectly captured the look and feel of those delightful old stop motion specials . " Judge Dawn Hunt of DVD Verdict called the episode " a sweet holiday treat , punctuated by musical numbers that 'll leave you smiling . " He added " If you 're looking for a new holiday viewing , ' It 's a SpongeBob Christmas ! ' is definitely worthy of consideration . " Paul Mavis of DVD Talk applauded the episode but has doubts if it will become the classic that will be watched every season . Director Walsh said that " Hopefully this will become a new tradition . "

In her review for the About.com , Nancy Basile 's review was mixed to positive and gave the episode a score of four out of five . She wrote , " ... though I disagree with a few of the animator 's choices , this Christmas special is a treat . " Basile criticized its characters especially the use of foam to create the characters and the way Santa Claus was depicted saying " ... he looks like a pig with liver spots . " The animators responded to this comment about their interpretation of Santa Claus , saying " We definitely wanted to keep an element of strangeness , almost scary aspects in the story . " Caballero explained that the idea of making Santa Claus look tired and strange came when they saw a drawing of him by Marc Ceccarelli or Luke Brookshier . Caballero said , " We thought that was a great idea . So we came up with our own little back story where Bikini Bottom is the last stop for Santa . He 's tired , he wants to get home , take his shoes off ... We honed in on the old descriptions of Santa being a jolly old elf . We pictured him as humanoid , but not necessarily directly human . "

= = = Accolades = = =

= = Merchandise = =

A book based on the episode was released on September 10 , 2013 . The book was published by Random House .