

= Season 4 (30 Rock) =

" Season 4 " is the first episode of the fourth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 59th episode overall . It was written by the series creator , executive producer and lead actress , Tina Fey and directed by series producer Don Scardino . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on October 15 , 2009 . Guest stars in this episode include Steve Buscemi , Liz Holtan , and Paula Pell .

The episode takes place in 2009 as concerns rise over The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan (TGS) , a fictitious sketch comedy series . Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) is worried that the show no longer appeals to mainstream America . He tells Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) to return to his lower @-@ class roots and Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) to become more " country " . Meanwhile , Jack tasks Liz Lemon (Fey) with finding a new cast member for TGS . Finally , NBC page Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) grows angry over Jack 's large financial bonus , somewhat similar to the real @-@ world AIG bonus payments controversy .

" Season 4 " has received generally positive reviews from television critics . According to the Nielsen ratings system , the episode was watched by 6 @.@ 312 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 3 @.@ 0 rating / 8 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

The episode opens with Jack welcoming Liz , Tracy , and Jenna to " Season 4 " , a fusion cuisine restaurant which serves the best @-@ selling food from the rest of America , " Cheesy Blasters " . Jack uses this to " teach ... a lesson " that they have " lost touch with the heartland of consumers " . He believes the cast and crew of TGS with Tracy Jordan have become too elitist and need to change to survive in tough economic times . Towards this goal Jack tells Tracy to reconnect with his roots and Jenna suggests that she can " go country " .

Despite the plans for Tracy and Jenna , Jack tells Liz ? the head writer for TGS ? to begin searching for a new cast member to help lessen this elitist image . Liz recruits TGS producer Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) to help in her search , planning trips to comedy clubs to find new talent . Both agree to try to keep the process secret from the cast and crew for fear that they would be angered over the idea of a new actor joining the cast . Liz and Pete give awkward answers trying to explain why they are going places together and ultimately tell the TGS writing staff . They also inadvertently tell Josh Girard (Lonny Ross) who , angered by the news , quits the show .

Meanwhile , Kenneth ? an NBC page ? goes to Jack worried that he cannot honestly sign his timesheet because Kenneth worked many overtime hours but NBC has stopped paying for it to save money . Jack convinces him to sign the sheet , but Kenneth later accidentally receives a large bonus check of Jack 's instead of his own paycheck . Kenneth grows angry over the bonus and leads a page strike . The strike grows in size as other trade unions join it , along with Tracy in an attempt to join the common man . Jack hires private detective Lenny Wosniak (Steve Buscemi) to try to end the strike , but he fails . Finally , Jack admits to Kenneth that he is a " big ol ' liar " and Kenneth ends the strike (though he nearly reveals to the other pages it was over a personal matter) .

= = Production = =

" Season 4 " was written by series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey , and directed by series producer Don Scardino . This was Fey 's eighteenth writing credit , and Scardino 's twenty @-@ second helmed episode . " Season 4 " originally aired on NBC in the United States on October 15 , 2009 , as the season premiere episode of the show 's fourth season and the 59th overall episode of the series . The episode was filmed on August 28 , September 1 , September 30 , and October 9 , 2009 .

Actor Steve Buscemi reprised his role as private investigator Lenny Wosniak for the fourth time ,

having appeared in " The Collection " , " The Natural Order " , and " Mamma Mia " . Buscemi directed the 30 Rock episode " Retreat to Move Forward " that was broadcast on January 22 , 2009 , during the show 's third season . Paula Pell , a producer and writer on the show , made her third appearance as the character Paula Hornberger , the wife of Pete Hornberger , played by Scott Adsit .

The episode somewhat parodies the AIG bonus payments controversy that occurred in March 2009 when it was publicly disclosed that AIG ? an American insurance corporation ? was paying approximately \$ 200 million in bonus payments to employees of its financial services division . In the episode , NBC page Kenneth Parcell , along with other pages , wants to be paid for overtime , however , NBC has stopped paying for it to save money . Later , Kenneth receives General Electric executive Jack Donaghy 's large bonus check by accident and is angered by this , and as a result , Kenneth rallies all the pages to strike . Despite hiring Lenny to try and end the strike , Jack finally gives in to Kenneth 's demand . Television reviewer Maureen Ryan of the Chicago Tribune noted that the strike here was similar to that of the 2007 ? 2008 Writers Guild of America strike .

Part of this episode featured Liz Lemon and Pete going around comedy clubs looking to cast a new individual on TGS after Jack , Liz and Pete 's boss , explained that the show 's staff have become too elitist and need to change to survive in tough economic times , and that the addition of a new cast member would help lessen this elitist image . The search for a new cast member would continue throughout the season . The scene with Jenna Maroney pulling her intern 's (Liz Holtan) earring off , as Jenna believed that her intern wanted to be an actress , was originally meant for the season three episode " Gavin Volure " , but was instead featured on 30 Rock 's season three DVD as part of the deleted scenes in the Bonus feature .

Two filmed scenes from " Season 4 " were cut out from the airing . Instead , the scenes were featured on 30 Rock 's season four DVD as part of the deleted scenes in the Bonus feature . In the first scene , in the TGS make @-@ up room , Jenna asks Liz for a ride to Pennsylvania so that she can buy a Confederate Flag so that she can wear as a tube top on her appearance on Fox & Friends , however , Liz cannot give her a ride as she is busy . Kenneth stops by and informs Jenna that actress Mischa Barton is on the phone and wants to speak with her . Jenna , however , tells Kenneth to tell Barton that the deal is off as she has decided to go country . In the second scene , Jack and Lenny go through Kenneth 's page desk , while Kenneth is participating in the page strike . The two hope to find something that would damage Kenneth 's reputation but instead the two come up empty .

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen ratings system , " Season 4 " was watched by 6 @.@ 312 million households in its original American broadcast , and earned a 3 @.@ 0 rating / 8 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . This means that it was seen by 3 @.@ 0 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 8 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This season premiere episode was down by 2 @.@ 4 million from the previous season 's premiere which had 8 @.@ 7 million viewers and was at the time the highest @-@ rated episode of the series . Variety and ABC noted that the 2009 Major League Baseball playoffs were a " competitive factor " for ratings on the episode 's original air date . 30 Rock 's third season , by comparison , did not premiere until October 30 , 2008 , a day after the 2008 World Series had ended .

IGN contributor Robert Canning reviewed the episode , giving it high marks saying it " proves yet again that 30 Rock is worthy of the Best Comedy Emmy " and scored the episode a 9 @.@ 2 out of 10 . Sean Gandert of Paste magazine also reviewed " Season 4 " , saying it did " little to disappoint and in fact starts the show off on much stronger footing than the first couple episodes of season 3 . " Gandert said the episode " doesn 't have quite as many truly classic moments as the show 's peaks in seasons one and two " but that " it also never really hits a sour note . " Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad enjoyed the economic crisis , cutbacks , and corporate bonuses theme in the episode , explaining that one of the reasons he loves the show " is because it can take something that 's in the

news and make it the plot of an episode without it feeling weird or forced . " Sassone wrote that despite " Season 4 " not being the best episode of 30 Rock " it was still very good . " TV Guide 's Michael Anthony commented that Steve Buscemi is " so weird and yet does it in such an endearing way . " Mary McNamara for the Los Angeles Times called Kenneth 's strike one of the more hilarious strikes in history . Entertainment Weekly 's Margaret Lyons noted that this episode of 30 Rock had strong moments " and was a solid start to the new season " . David Zurawik , a contributor for The Baltimore Sun , liked the episode and enjoyed Buscemi 's appearance , noting he " brings just the right mix of sleaze and smiles to the role . " The Chicago Sun @-@ Times ' Paige Wiser noted , " ... tonight 's season premiere , the hype is warranted : 30 Rock is in all its glory . " Kevin Aeh of Time Out magazine wrote that the best part from " Season 4 " was Tracy 's storyline after being told to reconnect with his roots .

Not all reviews were positive . David Hinckley of the New York Daily News reported that the season premiere episode " never quite [found] its rhythm . " Linda Stasi of the New York Post said that " Season 4 " had " some good laughs here , but there 's also the threat that 30 Rock could easily turn into that thing the writers relentlessly make fun of ? TV shows and stars that are too smug , too smart and too out @-@ of @-@ touch for their own good . " The Kansas City Star 's Aaron Barnhart deemed it as " one of the weakest 30 Rock 's " he has ever seen and that he found the episode boring .