

= The Seinfeld Chronicles =

" The Seinfeld Chronicles " (also known as " Good News , Bad News " or " Pilot ") is the pilot episode of the American sitcom Seinfeld , which first aired on NBC on July 5 , 1989 .

The first of the 180 Seinfeld episodes , the pilot was written by show creators Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld , and directed by Art Wolff . The episode revolves around a fictionalized version of Seinfeld , who is unsure about the romantic intentions of a woman he met , and frets about the meaning of her signals with his friend George (Jason Alexander) and neighbor Kessler (Michael Richards) .

Though they had been asked to put together a 90 @-@ minute TV special , Seinfeld and David wrote a TV pilot as they felt their " show about nothing " concept would fit better in a shorter format . The storyline , and the main characters , were inspired by real @-@ life events and people . Though the NBC executives were unsure about the show , they , as Warren Littlefield would later state , " all said , ah what the hell , let 's try a pilot on this thing and see what happens " . The test audiences , however , reacted extremely negatively . Although NBC would still broadcast the episode to see how audiences and TV critics would react , the network had already decided not to pick up the show , as a result of the test @-@ results .

When The Seinfeld Chronicles aired , it was watched by nearly 11 % of American households , and received generally favorable reviews from critics , who reacted with disappointment that NBC did not order a first season . Convinced that the show had potential , and supported by the positive reviews , NBC executive Rick Ludwin managed to convince his superiors to order a four @-@ episode first season (the smallest order in TV history) , by offering a part of his personal budget in return . The show , renamed Seinfeld , would go on to become one of the most successful sitcoms in television history .

= = Plot = =

The series opens with Jerry Seinfeld (Jerry Seinfeld) and George Costanza (Jason Alexander) seated at Pete 's Luncheonette , debating the placement of one of George 's shirt buttons . Jerry tells George about a woman he met in Lansing , Michigan , Laura (Pamela Brull) , who is coming to New York , and the two discuss whether or not she has romantic intentions . The next evening , Jerry tells his neighbor Kessler (Michael Richards) that he thinks he misunderstood the situation with Laura . However , he then receives a telephone call from Laura , who asks if she can stay overnight at his apartment . Though Jerry agrees , he is still unsure whether or not her visit is intended to be romantic . George and Jerry continue to debate the issue , with Jerry determined to find the true nature of her visit .

While waiting at the airport for Laura to arrive , Jerry and George try to identify the possible signals Laura might give upon her arrival , with George explaining the meaning of various greetings . However , when Laura arrives , her greeting is ambiguous . Upon arriving at Jerry 's apartment Laura removes her shoes and some excess clothing to get comfortable , asks for wine , and turns down the light and asks if she can stay over a second night . As Jerry removes his own shoes and begins to grow confident , the phone rings for Laura . When Laura gets off the phone she tells Jerry : " Never get engaged . " Jerry then realizes that he has no chance with Laura , but has already committed himself ? and his one @-@ bedroom apartment ? to an entire weekend with her , including a five @-@ hour sightseeing boat ride around Manhattan .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

The Seinfeld Chronicles was written as the pilot for the show that would eventually be called Seinfeld , though earlier versions of the script would refer to the program as Stand Up and The Jerry Seinfeld Show . The idea for the show started on November 2 , 1988 , after NBC executives had

approached comedian Jerry Seinfeld to do a project with the network , upon a suggestion by George Shapiro , Seinfeld 's manager at the time . Seinfeld enlisted fellow comedian Larry David to help him develop it , and they wrote a concept for a special about where comedians get their material . However , upon further discussion , Seinfeld felt that the concept could not be sustained for 90 minutes , upon which the two decided that the project was to become a pilot for a TV @-@ series , rather than a special . Developed by NBC executive Rick Ludwin , and produced by Castle Rock Entertainment , it was a mix of Seinfeld 's stand @-@ up comedy routines and idiosyncratic , conversational scenes focusing on mundane aspects of everyday life .

Conceived as a " show about nothing , " in which the main characters would " just make fun of stuff " , Seinfeld said that the idea of the pilot episode was to explore the " gaps in society where there are no rules . " The storyline , as well as most of the main characters , were inspired by the personal lives of its creators . Jerry was a fictionalized version of Seinfeld , George a fictionalized version of Larry David and Kessler was based on David 's neighbor Kenny Kramer . Though Seinfeld was initially concerned the " wacky neighbor " would be too much of a cliché , David convinced him to put the character in the script . However , anticipating that the actual Kramer would exploit the benefits of having a TV character based on him , David hesitated to call the character Kramer . Thus , in the pilot , the character 's name was " Kessler " . However , intrigued by the name , Seinfeld was convinced that the character 's name should be Kramer , prompting Kenny Kramer to call NBC 's legal department with various financial and legal demands , most of which he received . The name inconsistency would eventually be corrected in the season 9 episode " The Betrayal " in which Kramer explains that Kessler is the name on his apartment buzzer .

David and Seinfeld re @-@ wrote the script several times before submitting it to the network , dropping and adding various elements . Originally George , who was called Bennett in early drafts , was a comedian as well , and the first scene of the episode focussed on Jerry and George discussing their stand @-@ up material . The character of Kramer , was not included in the first draft of the script , and in another draft he was called " Hoffman " . Another element that was added was Kessler 's dog , since it was originally planned that Jerry 's stand @-@ up routines would match the events of each episode . Though the stand @-@ up routine about dogs was eventually dropped , the scene in which Kessler enters with his dog remained in the episode . When David and Seinfeld eventually submitted the script , the network executives were unsure whether or not to produce the pilot , but as NBC executive Warren Littlefield would later state " we all said , ah what the hell , let 's try a pilot on this thing and see what happens " .

Directed by Art Wolff , the pilot was filmed in front of a live studio audience on April 27 , 1989 , at Stage 9 of Ren @-@ Mar Studios , the same studio where The Dick Van Dyke Show was filmed , which was seen by the crew as a good omen . The exterior of Pete 's Luncheonette , the restaurant in which the episode opens , was a leftover set piece from The Muppets Take Manhattan (1984) . Seinfeld 's stand @-@ up routine was recorded at Ren @-@ Mar Studios in Hollywood , in front of an audience of paid extras , though not all of the recorded material was included in the broadcast version . Additionally , a scene was recorded featuring Jerry and George driving to the airport talking about changing lanes on the road and giving " Thank you waves " , but was cut before broadcasting . The music used in the episode was composed by Jep Epstein ; however , when the show was picked up , Epstein 's tune was replaced by the trademark slap bass music by Jonathan Wolff .

= = = Casting = = =

The Seinfeld Chronicles featured four characters that were intended to be series regulars if the show was to be picked @-@ up for a first season : Jerry , George , Kramer and Claire the waitress . Though it was already settled that Seinfeld would play a fictionalized version of himself , auditions were held for the other three characters . Though George was based on Larry David , David was keen on writing , and did not have the desire to portray the character himself . Prior to the casting progress , Seinfeld pleaded with his friend Jake Johannsen to play the part , but he rejected it . When the casting process started , as casting director Marc Hirschfeld stated , the casting crew " saw every actor [they] could possibly see in Los Angeles " . Among these actors were Larry Miller ,

Brad Hall , David Alan Grier , and Nathan Lane yet none of them seemed fit for the part . Jason Alexander auditioned for the part via a video tape , though he had very little hope for being cast , as he felt he was doing a Woody Allen impression . However , upon watching the tape , David and Seinfeld were immediately convinced Alexander would be the right actor to cast . However , traditionally casting sessions work with rounds , so Alexander and a few other actors considered for the role were flown to Los Angeles for a second audition . One of the other actors who made it to this round was Larry Miller . As Alexander knew Miller was a close friend of Seinfeld , he was convinced he would not get the part , but eventually did .

Kenny Kramer initially demanded that he would play the part of Kessler , as he served as the inspiration for the character . However , David did not want this and it was decided upon that casting sessions would be held . Among those who auditioned for the part of Kramer were Steve Vinovich , Tony Shalhoub and Larry Hankin . Although he was not cast for the part Hankin would later portray an in @-@ show fictional version of Kramer in the season four episode " The Pilot " . Seinfeld and David were both familiar with Michael Richards , and David had worked with him on Fridays . Richards did his final audition at the Century Plaza Hotel on April 18 , 1989 , reputedly finishing with a handstand . David was not sure about casting Richards , as he was trying to cast an actor that resembled the original Kramer . However , impressed by Richards ' audition , Seinfeld convinced David that Richards would be the right actor for the part .

Lee Garlington was cast as Claire the Waitress , who in an earlier draft of the episode was called " Meg " . Though initially cast as a series regular , the character was replaced with Elaine Benes when the series was picked up for a first season . Accounts differ on the reason why the character was replaced . Warren Littlefield has said that it was because the character 's occupation : " I thought that as a waitress she 'd never be one of the gang . She 'd be relegated to pouring coffee , catching up . So I insisted they create a female character they wanted to spend time with " . Dennis Bjorklund of Seinfeld Reference has suggested that the character was dropped in favor of a female character with more sex appeal . However , Alexander said that Garlington was written out of the series because she had re @-@ written her scene and given it to David , who was not happy with this . Seinfeld has , however , stated that this was not the reason the character was removed from the show , but rather that the producers were looking for " someone who was more involved " . Julia Louis @-@ Dreyfus , who would go on to replace Garlington , has stated that she was not aware of the pilot before becoming a regular on the show , and she will never watch it out of superstition .

= = Reception = =

The pilot was first screened by a group of two dozen NBC executives in Burbank , California in early 1989 . Although the pilot did not yield the explosion of laughter garnered by the pilots for the decade 's previous NBC successes like The Cosby Show and The Golden Girls , it drew mostly positive responses from the assembled executives . One exception was Brandon Tartikoff , who was concerned that the show was " Too New York , too Jewish " . Before the episode 's TV premiere it was shown to a test audience of 400 households , and met with extremely negative responses . Littlefield would later recall " In the history of pilot reports , Seinfeld has got to be one of the worst of all time " . The memo that summarized the test audience 's reaction , contained feedback such as " No segment of the audience was eager to watch the show again " and " None of the [supporting characters] were particularly liked " . Despite the low rating the show received from its test audience , the first public broadcast of " The Seinfeld Chronicles " took place on the fifth of July 1989 , to see how viewers would react , even though the executives had already decided the show would not be picked @-@ up for a full season . " The Seinfeld Chronicles " finished second in its time slot , behind the CBS police drama Jake and the Fatman , receiving a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 9 / 19 , meaning that the pilot was watched by 10 @. @ 9 % of American households , and that 19 % of all televisions in use at the time were tuned into it . With these ratings " The Seinfeld Chronicles " finished in the 21st place of the week it was broadcast , tied with Fox 's Totally Hidden Video .

Unlike the test audience , television critics generally reacted positively to the pilot , viewing it as original and innovative , USA Today critic Tom Green summarized the show as a " crisply funny

blend of stand @-@ up routines interwoven with more traditional sitcom stuff " . Eric Mink of St. Louis Post @-@ Dispatch wrote he thought the show was unusual and intriguing , yet " quite funny " . Joe Stein of the San Diego Evening Tribune commented " Not all standup comedians fit into a sitcom format , but Seinfeld does " . A more negative response came from a The Fresno Bee critic , that stated " I liked the concept , but Seinfeld ' s jokes were so dull that you hoped the standup stuff would fly by so you could get back to the story " . Though the critic praised Alexander 's acting he commented that his performance was not enough to keep the show " from being just another piece of summer drivel offered up by a major commercial network " .

Various critics compared the pilot to It 's Garry Shandling 's Show . In his review of the episode The Philadelphia Inquirer critic Ken Tucker commented " Seinfeld 's brisk funniness prevents Chronicles from being a rip @-@ off " , while Jerry Krupnick of The Star @-@ Ledger felt that The Seinfeld Chronicles differentiated itself from It 's Garry Shandling 's Show by its supporting cast , which he praised . By contrast , John Voorhees of The Seattle Times commented that , though he thought the show was amusing , he considered It 's Garry Shandling 's Show to be better , and the Houston Chronicle 's Mike McDaniel referred to the pilot as " a not @-@ as @-@ good Garry Shandling @-@ like show " .

Most critics reacted with disappointment to the fact that NBC had not picked up the show . Bob Niedt of the Syracuse Herald @-@ Journal commented " What gives ? Comedy this good , and NBC is keeping -- excuse me -- A Different World on the schedule ? " . Ken Tucker stated " NBC is making a mistake if it doesn 't pick up The Seinfeld Chronicles as a midseason replacement ; it 's bound to be superior to most of what the network has planned for the fall " . Additionally casting directors Hirschfeld and Meg Liberman were nominated for a Casting Society of America Artios Award for ' Best Casting for TV , Pilot ' , but lost to the casting directors of Northern Exposure .

Though the network executives had decided not to pick up The Seinfeld Chronicles for a first season , some of them were reluctant to give up on it , as they felt the series had potential . Rick Ludwin , one of the show 's greatest supporters , eventually made a deal with Tartikoff , giving up some of his own development money , cancelling a Bob Hope special , so that the entertainment division could order four more episodes of The Seinfeld Chronicles , which formed the rest of the show 's first season . Although this was a very low order number for a new series (the smallest sitcom order in television history) , Castle Rock failed to find any other buyers when it tried to sell the show to other networks , and accepted the order . About a year later , the first season would premiere , the show was renamed Seinfeld , to avoid confusion with ABC 's The Marshall Chronicles . To lead in the first official season of Seinfeld , the pilot episode was repeated on June 28 , 1990 ; it received a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 9 / 26 .