

= The Last One (Friends) =

" The Last One " is the series finale of the television sitcom Friends . The episode serves as the seventeenth and eighteenth episode of season ten ; the episode 's two parts were classified as two separate episodes . It was written by series creators David Crane and Marta Kauffman , and directed by executive producer Kevin S. Bright . The series finale first aired on NBC in the United States on May 6 , 2004 , when it was watched by 52 @.@ 5 million viewers , making it the most watched entertainment telecast in six years and the sixth most watched overall television series finale in U.S. history , as well as the most watched episode from any television series throughout the decade 2000s on U.S. television . In Canada , the finale aired simultaneously on May 6 , 2004 on Global , and was viewed by 5 @.@ 16 million viewers , becoming the highest viewed episode of the series , and also becoming highest @-@ viewed and highest @-@ rated episode ever in Canada for a sitcom .

The series finale closes several long running storylines . Ross Geller (David Schwimmer) confesses his love for Rachel Green (Jennifer Aniston) , and they decide to resume their relationship ; and Monica Geller (Courteney Cox) and Chandler Bing (Matthew Perry) adopt twins and move to the suburbs . The episode 's final scene shows the group leaving their apartments for the final time and going to Central Perk for one last cup of coffee .

Prior to writing the episode , Crane , Kauffman and Bright watched finales from other sitcoms for inspiration . Kauffman found that she liked the ones that stayed true to the series . Filming took place at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank , California ; part one was taped on January 16 , and part two on January 23 . The finale was well received by critics and the cast members .

= = Plot = =

= = = Part 1 = = =

Phoebe Buffay (Lisa Kudrow) and Joey Tribbiani (Matt LeBlanc) pack the belongings of Monica and Chandler , who have accompanied Erica (Anna Faris) to the hospital . Rachel leaves Ross ' bedroom after their apparent reunion in the previous episode . Erica gives birth to twins , much to the surprise of Monica and Chandler , who were expecting only one child . At his apartment , Joey shows Phoebe his house @-@ warming gift for Monica and Chandler : a chick and duckling to replace the ones that died . Ross arrives and confesses to the pair that he slept with Rachel . Rachel emerges from her bedroom and , to his disappointment , tells Ross that their night together was " the perfect way to say goodbye " .

Later at the Central Perk café , Phoebe convinces Ross to tell Rachel how he feels about her before she leaves for her new job in Paris . As he is about to tell her , Central Perk manager Gunther (James Michael Tyler) confesses his love for Rachel . Back at Monica and Chandler 's apartment , Ross decides not to tell Rachel , for fear of rejection . She prepares to leave to catch her flight , but waits long enough for Monica and Chandler to return with the twins , named Erica (after their biological mother) and Jack (after Monica 's father) . After Rachel leaves , Ross has a change of heart , and Phoebe takes him in her taxi to follow Rachel to the airport .

= = = Part 2 = = =

Joey returns to his apartment to fetch the chick and the duck he was hiding , but finds they have become trapped in the foosball table . Chandler and Joey decide to break it open when they cannot find any other way of getting the birds out . Phoebe 's reckless driving gets her and Ross to JFK Airport and , after buying a ticket to get past security , they search the information boards for Rachel 's flight number . When they cannot locate her flight on any of the information boards , Ross calls and checks the number with Monica but discovers they are at the wrong airport ; Ross and Phoebe drove to JFK , while Rachel was flying out of nearby Newark Airport . Phoebe phones Rachel , who

has already boarded her flight , to stall her for time . When a passenger (Jim Rash) overhears Phoebe saying there is a problem with the fictitious " left phalange " of the plane , he gets off the plane , prompting everyone else to leave . Chandler and Joey , who are emotionally attached to the foosball table , find they are unable to bear breaking it open , so Monica nonchalantly offers to do it for them . After they retrieve the birds , Chandler suggests Joey keeps them .

Phoebe and Ross arrive at the airport as Rachel boards the plane again . Ross tells her he loves her , but she is unable to deal with his confession and gets on the plane anyway . Ross returns home , dejected , and finds a message from Rachel on the phone . She explains her actions and decides to get off the plane , but the message cuts off . Ross turns around to see Rachel standing in the doorway and they kiss . The following morning , the friends gather in Monica and Chandler 's empty apartment . With some time remaining before Monica and Chandler leave for their new house , the six all leave their keys to the apartment on the kitchen counter and decide to go for one last cup of coffee together , although it is only implied and never stated that this will be at Central Perk . As the last line of the series , Chandler sarcastically quips , " Sure ... where ? " . The final scene is a shot of the apartment , panning round slowly from the living space to the front door .

= = Production = =

= = Writing and music = =

The series ' creators completed the first draft of the hour @-@ long finale in January 2004 , four months prior to its airing on May 6 . Before writing the episode , David Crane , Marta Kauffman and Kevin S. Bright decided to watch the series finales of other sitcoms , paying attention to what worked and what did not . Kauffman found that they liked the ones which stayed true to the series , and they found the finale of The Mary Tyler Moore Show to be the gold standard . The writers had difficulty writing the finale , and spent several days thinking about the final scene without being able to write a word . Crane said that they did not want to do " something high concept , or take the show out of the show " .

The music playing as the camera pans across the empty apartment at the end of the episode is " Embryonic Journey " by Jefferson Airplane . The song " Yellow Ledbetter " by the band Pearl Jam is also featured in the episode ? after Rachel boards the plane for the first time ? making it the first Pearl Jam song to be licensed for a television show . A spokesperson for the group said it was , " simply a matter of the show 's producers asking permission " .

= = Filming = =

The episode was filmed in Los Angeles , California on Stage 24 at Warner Bros. Studios , where Friends had been filmed since its second season . The first part was taped on January 16 , and the second on January 23 , 2004 . After the series finale , Stage 24 was renamed " The Friends Stage " .

A month before the filming of the final episode , Aniston said that with each episode it got " harder just to read the lines . " She explained that the cast was " all just nerves and raw emotions [...] No one knows how to feel . We may need to be sedated on the last night . " The producers promised a tearful ending , and the cast admitted their crying was not faked when they filmed their scenes . LeBlanc revealed it had been too much for him and the rest of the cast ; he said Kudrow started crying first , and when he looked at Aniston and Cox they also appeared emotional . Schwimmer , who LeBlanc thought was the " consummate professional " , was also upset , so LeBlanc " just lost it . " Maggie Wheeler , who was Chandler 's " on and off " girlfriend Janice , told People , " the entire cast had to go back and have their makeup redone before starting , " and that Perry broke the tension by saying , " Somebody is gonna get fired . " Perry told the New York Daily News that he did not cry , " but I felt like I was about to for like seven hours . "

Although it was planned that some key scenes of the episode would be filmed without an audience

in order to avoid leaks of plot spoilers , the producers decided not to worry about the issue and filmed it all in front of the live studio audience . The producers also instigated the rumor that multiple endings would be filmed ; in fact , only one was planned and shot .

At the start of each Friends episode filming , the cast would ordinarily be introduced to the studio audience one at a time , but this time the cast headed out for their pre @-@ curtain bow together . " That made me cry , " said Diane Newman , who was the script supervisor of the show . Among the specially invited audience of the taping were Hank Azaria , who played Phoebe 's scientist boyfriend in several episodes over the years ; David Arquette , who filmed his wife Cox and the others backstage with a video camera ; and Wheeler . Missing was Brad Pitt , Aniston 's then @-@ husband ; Pitt told the producers he wanted to be surprised when the finale aired on television . Although some guests were invited , around 75 % of the studio audience were ' ordinary ' members of the public so that their reactions would be congruous with the rest of the series . However , friends , family and colleagues of the cast and crew served as extras throughout the episode .

= = Reception = =

= = = Promotion , ratings and awards = = =

NBC heavily promoted the series finale , which was preceded by weeks of hype . The top price for a 30 @-@ second commercial during the U.S. broadcast was approximately \$ 1 million USD . Viewing parties were organized by local NBC affiliates around the United States , including an event at Universal CityWalk featuring a special broadcast of the finale on an outdoor Astrovision screen . It was shown in New York City , where over 3 @,@ 000 people watched it on big screens in parks . The finale was the subject of two episodes of Dateline NBC , one of which ran for two hours . Prior to the airing of the episode , a one @-@ hour retrospective of clips from previous episodes was shown . Following the finale , The Tonight Show with Jay Leno was filmed on the set of the Friends ' Central Perk cafe , which featured the series ' cast as guests . The advertising rates for the finale averaged \$ 2 million for 30 seconds of commercial time . This currently remains as the largest advertising rate ever for a sitcom , breaking the previous record held by the Seinfeld finale at \$ 1 @.@ 7 million .

The finale was watched by 52 @.@ 5 million American viewers , making it the most watched entertainment telecast in six years , and the most watched episode of the decade 2000s on U.S. television . " The Last One " was not the most watched Friends episode in the series ' history ; that distinction belongs to " The One After the Superbowl " which , as the title suggests , aired immediately after Super Bowl XXX on January 28 , 1996 and drew an audience of 52 @.@ 9 million viewers . The Friends finale was the sixth most watched overall series finale in U.S. television history , behind the finales of M * A * S * H , Roots , Cheers , The Fugitive and Seinfeld , which were watched by 125 , 100 , 92 @.@ 5 , 78 and 76 @.@ 3 million viewers , respectively . The retrospective episode was watched by under 36 million viewers , and the finale was the second most @-@ watched television show of the year , behind the Super Bowl .

The episode was nominated for two Primetime Emmy Awards at the 56th Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Multi @-@ Camera Sound Mixing for a Series or Special and Outstanding Multi @-@ Camera Picture Editing for a Series , but lost to the final season of Frasier in both categories .

= = = Critical reviews = = =

Reviews of the series finale were generally positive . Robert Bianco of USA Today described the finale as entertaining and satisfying , and praised it for deftly mixing emotion and humor while showcasing each of the stars . Sarah Rodman of the Boston Herald praised Aniston and Schwimmer for their acting , but felt that their characters ' reunion " felt a bit too neat , even if it was what most of the show 's legions of fans wanted . " Newsday 's Noel Holston called the episode " sweet and dumb and satisfying , " while Roger Catlin of The Hartford Courant felt that newcomers to

the series would be " surprised at how laughless the affair could be , and how nearly every strained gag depends on the sheer stupidity of its characters . "

An editorial in USA Today highlighted the view of many critics who found problem with the aging cast , commenting , " Friends was getting creaky even as it remained popular . " Heather Havrilesky of Salon.com said that despite the " nauseating hype and the disappointing season and the lackluster finale , it 's important to remember what a great show this was for such a very long time . " Ken Parish Perkins of the Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram gave the finale a B grade , calling it " more touching than comical , more satisfying in terms of closure than knee @-@ slappingly funny . "

= = = Response from the staff = = =

The cast members reportedly got together in Los Angeles to watch the finale . It was well received by the main cast , who were confident that the fans would have the same reaction . David Schwimmer said , " It 's exactly what I had hoped . We all end up with a sense of a new beginning and the audience has a sense that it 's a new chapter in the lives of all these characters . " At the taping of the episode , the cast and crew passed around yearbooks , custom @-@ made by the production staff , and signed them for each other . The cast gave the producers inscribed Cartier SA watches , while the producers gave the cast Neil Lane jewelry . As the sets were broken down , the cast and crew each got a chunk of the street outside Central Perk in a glass box as a keepsake .

There were 3 separate wrap parties - a dinner at the Aniston @-@ Pitt residence on January 19 , 2004 , a sit down at cast hangout Il Sole in West Hollywood on January 22 , and a big party for 1 @-@ 000 guests on January 24 at Los Angeles ' Park Plaza Hotel . At the party at the Park Plaza Hotel , The Rembrandts performed the theme song of Friends , " I 'll Be There for You " , and the cast gave a re @-@ enactment of the pilot episode 's first scene .