

= Kidney Now ! =

" Kidney Now ! " is the twenty @-@ second episode and season finale of the third season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 58th overall episode of the series . It was directed by series producer Don Scardino , and written by show producers Jack Burditt and Robert Carlock . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on May 14 , 2009 . Guest stars in this episode include Alan Alda , Kay Cannon , Donald Glover , Napiera Groves , Chris Parnell , Paula Pell , and Sherri Shepherd . In addition , " Kidney Now ! " featured many musical guest stars including Clay Aiken , Elvis Costello , Mary J. Blige , Sheryl Crow , the Beastie Boys (Mike D and Ad Rock) , Steve Earle , Adam Levine , Sara Bareilles , Wyclef Jean , Norah Jones , Talib Kweli , Michael McDonald , Rhett Miller , Moby , Robert Randolph , Rachael Yamagata and Cyndi Lauper , all as themselves .

In the episode , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) gets to know his newly discovered father , Milton Greene (Alda) , but quickly learns that Milton needs a kidney transplant , and discovers he is not a suitable donor . As a result , Jack decides to use the liberal media to find an alternate way to get him a kidney donor . Meanwhile , people seek Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) out as a relationship expert as a result of her " Dealbreaker " sketches , and Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) helps Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) deal with his embarrassment over not finishing high school .

The song " He Needs a Kidney " was written by show composer and co @-@ executive producer Jeff Richmond . The concept of doing a charity concert was based on Robert Carlock and series creator Tina Fey wanting to include a musical performance in the episode with the Milton Greene character in need of a kidney donor . Carlock and Fey wanted " He Needs a Kidney " to be similar to the 1985 charity song , " We Are the World " . Following the airing of this 30 Rock episode , NBC released the musical performance video of " He Needs a Kidney " on iTunes with all proceeds from the sales going to the National Kidney Foundation .

" Kidney Now ! " was generally well received among television critics . According to the Nielsen Media Research , this episode was watched by 5 @.@ 7 million viewers . Jack Burditt and Robert Carlock were nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award nomination in the category for Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series for their work in this episode . In addition , Tony Pipitone and Griffin Richardson received a Creative Arts Emmy Award nomination in the category for Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Comedy or Drama Series (half @-@ hour) and Animation .

= = Plot = =

Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) gets to know his newly discovered father , Milton Greene (Alan Alda) but soon discovers Milton has a serious medical condition and is in search of a kidney donor . After discovering he is an unsuitable donor by Dr. Leo Spaceman (Chris Parnell) , Jack uses his contacts ? musicians Clay Aiken , Sara Bareilles , the Beastie Boys (Mike D and Ad @-@ Rock) , Mary J. Blige , Elvis Costello , Sheryl Crow , Steve Earle , Wyclef Jean , Norah Jones , Talib Kweli , Cyndi Lauper , Adam Levine , Michael McDonald , Rhett Miller , Moby , Robert Randolph , and Rachael Yamagata ? to arrange a charity benefit entitled " Kidney Now ! " in attempt to find a donor for Milton .

Meanwhile , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) gains notoriety after making an appearance on The Vontella Show , along with Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) , as a relationship expert after her " Dealbreaker " sketches on the fictitious comedy sketch show The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan (TGS) . As a result of the success she received as the relationship expert on The Vontella Show , Liz signs a book deal based on the sketch , and begins dispensing relationship advice to the female staff of TGS , and to Angie Jordan (Sherri Shepherd) and Paula Hornberger (Paula Pell) , the wives of TGS star Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) and producer Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) , respectively . Though , Tracy and Pete are upset with the advice Liz gave to their wives , Liz blows them off and goes to Quizno 's with her date .

At the same time , Tracy is invited to speak at the graduation ceremony of his former high school (named after Frank Lucas , the infamous Harlem drug lord) . NBC page and friend Kenneth Parcell (

Jack McBrayer) tries to help him overcome troubling memories from his high school experience . Kenneth persuades Tracy to go to the graduation , which he does , where Tracy gives his speech and receives an honorary diploma .

= = Production = =

" Kidney Now ! " was directed by series producer Don Scardino , and written by 30 Rock producers Jack Burditt and Robert Carlock . This was Burditt and Carlock 's fourth script collaboration , having penned the episodes " Cleveland " , " Subway Hero " , and " Sandwich Day " . This was Scardino 's twenty @-@ first directed episode . " Kidney Now ! " originally aired on NBC in the United States on May 14 , 2009 , as the twenty @-@ second episode and season finale of the show 's third season and the 58th overall episode of the series .

" Kidney Now ! " was first read by its cast on March 5 , 2009 ; it was filmed on March 16 ? 17 , 2009 . " He Needs a Kidney " , the charity song featured in this episode , was written by show composer and co @-@ executive producer Jeff Richmond . Richmond is married to series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . In discussion of the development of " Kidney Now ! " , Richmond said that Carlock and Fey " were trying to figure out a way to highlight Jack 's dad in getting a kidney and how they 're going to deal with that " , and that the two came to the decision to " take advantage of the singing " , as they have done so in the past with different 30 Rock episodes , in which the show 's characters have sung songs . Carlock and Fey agreed to the idea that a song be included in the season finale , but that it be an anthem like the 1985 charity song , " We Are the World " , as the cause is that the Milton Greene character is in need of a kidney donor . " Basically , the parameters were if ' We Are the World ' but they want to get a kidney . I think we had angles that everyone has two kidneys and you 'll only need one kidney , and we thought ' Alright , we 'll get some distance on that ' " , said Richmond . While working on the track , Fey suggested to Richmond that he incorporate Milton Greene 's name in one part of the song , which he did , as this was sung by singers Cyndi Lauper and Robert Randolph .

Giancarlo Vulcano , a music editor and associate arranger on the show , revealed that Richmond taught him the song one morning at Silvercup Studios ? where the show is filmed ? and they played the first half of " He Needs a Kidney " at the script 's read @-@ through . According to Vulcano , the 30 Rock staff loved the song and the two were satisfied with the reception of it . While arranging the instrumentation , Richmond hired violinists for the episode 's background music and for " He Needs a Kidney " , which according to him he usually does not get the opportunity to have a lot of violin sounds on the show . The recording sessions with the musical guests took place on Stage 1 at Silvercup Studios ; Stage 1 serves as the set for TGS with Tracy Jordan , a fictitious comedy sketch show featured on 30 Rock . Richmond and Vulcano were complimentary towards the musicians ? Clay Aiken , Sara Bareilles , the Beastie Boys (Mike D and Ad @-@ Rock) , Mary J. Blige , Elvis Costello , Sheryl Crow , Steve Earle , Wyclef Jean , Norah Jones , Talib Kweli , Cyndi Lauper , Adam Levine , Michael McDonald , Rhett Miller , Moby , Robert Randolph , and Rachael Yamagata ? who performed " He Needs a Kidney " . In the DVD commentary for this episode , Richmond believed that the entire song would not make it into the airing . Elvis Costello was once approached to do an appearance on 30 Rock , but the appearance fell @-@ through . At an Oscar 's after party , Fey ran into Costello and asked him if he could appear , which he agreed to . According to Fey , none of the music artists got paid to appear on the show as " they all did [it] for free . " The reason for this was due to a joke in the song in which Sheryl Crow was the only individual to get paid , as the rest said they did it for free . Following the broadcast of this episode of 30 Rock , the musical performance video was made available for digital download on iTunes with all the proceeds from the sales going to the National Kidney Foundation .

According to Fey , there were discussions on whether or not to use a real talk show host from New York , for the " Dealbreakers " segment , but ultimately decided to make one up and went with actress Napiera Groves who plays talk show host Vontella in " Kidney Now ! " . The Tracy character plot was based on Tracy Morgan who in real @-@ life was given a diploma by his former high school , DeWitt Clinton High School . Like the Tracy character , who dropped out of high school after

being asked to dissect a frog , Morgan dropped out of DeWitt Clinton when his father became ill . Jack and Liz 's scene , along with Tracy and Kenneth 's , at the end where they watch the charity concert , was filmed the day before the musical number took place . " They were pretending to look at the singing " , revealed Fey . They forced that shot in so that the episode not just end with the performance .

Professor Milton Greene was played by guest actor Alan Alda , best known for his role as Hawkeye Pierce from the television series M * A * S * H. This was Alda 's second appearance , having appeared in the previous episode " Mamma Mia " . In a scene of " Kidney Now ! " , Tracy breaks down crying and says " There is no baby . I was chicken ! I was chicken ! " then Milton , who sees this , asks " A guy crying about a chicken and a baby ? I thought this was a comedy show . " This was a reference to Alda 's M * A * S * H character in the series finale episode in which Hawkeye breaks down after realizing he had seen a woman smother her baby to death , not a chicken as Hawkeye had originally recalled in his repressed mind . Comedian actor Chris Parnell , who played Dr. Leo Spaceman in the season finale , has appeared in the main cast of Saturday Night Live (SNL) , a weekly sketch comedy series which airs on NBC in the United States . Fey was the head writer on SNL from 1999 until 2006 . Comedian actress Sherri Shepherd reprised her role as Angie Jordan , the wife of Tracy , for the fifth time . Paula Pell made her second guest spot as the character Paula Hornberger , the wife of Pete Hornberger , played by Scott Adsit . In " Kidney Now ! " , Angie and Paula ask Liz for relationship advice . In addition , 30 Rock writers Jack Burditt , Kay Cannon , and Donald Glover appear in the episode ; Burditt and Cannon appear in The Vontella Show segment as members from the audience who ask Liz questions . When Tracy accepts an honorary diploma from his former high school , in his speech , Tracy outs Glover 's character . The success of the benefit concert for Milton is not explicitly referenced until Alda 's character alludes to it in the season five episode " Christmas Attack Zone " , though in the season four episode " Into the Crevasse " , Milton is shown to have finished his book entitled From Peanut to President , a biography of U.S. President Jimmy Carter .

One filmed scene from " Kidney Now ! " was cut out from the airing . Instead , the scene was featured on 30 Rock 's season three DVD as part of the deleted scenes in the Bonus feature . In the scene , Liz enters the TGS writer 's room , and tells the writing staff that she got recognized from her appearance on The Vontella Show as the relationship expert from " Dealbreakers " . Pete cannot believe that Liz gave actual relationship advice on the program , citing Liz 's own past relationship faults .

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen Media Research , " Kidney Now ! " was watched by 5 @.@ 7 million viewers during its original United States broadcast . The rating was an 8 percent drop in viewership from the previous week 's episode , " Mamma Mia " , which was seen by 6 @.@ 2 million American viewers . The show claimed a 2 @.@ 8 rating / 7 share among viewers aged 18 to 49 , meaning that 2 @.@ 8 percent of all people in that group , and 7 percent of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . Jack Burditt and Robert Carlock received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series for their work on " Kidney Now ! " , but they lost it to fellow 30 Rock writer Matt Hubbard for the episode " Reunion " at the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards . At the same awards show , Tony Pipitone and Griffin Richardson were nominated for a Creative Arts Emmy Award for Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Comedy or Drama Series (half @-@ hour) and Animation .

IGN contributor Robert Canning wrote that the ending from this episode " did have a season finale feel to it with the big musical number . [...] Still , it was a great season , and I loved going out with two of the best characters on TV summing up the moment perfectly ? Liz : ' We sure had quite a year . ' Jack : ' What are you talking about ? It 's May . ' " Canning gave it an 8 @.@ 5 out of 10 rating . Television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @-@ Ledger wrote that the " all @-@ star cast of musicians " featured were not able to dominate the episode " to the point where the episode didn 't work . " Sepinwall , however , added that despite " Kidney Now ! " not being a classic 30 Rock

episode " it was [still] funny enough ? which , I suppose , also makes it an appropriate finale for this uneven season . " Further in the review , Sepinwall was complimentary towards Liz 's plot , writing that the character 's sequence on The Vontella Show was " hilarious , and a fine demonstration of how much confidence Tina Fey has gained as an actress over the years . " The A.V. Club ? s Nathan Rabin also enjoyed the Liz character , reporting that she " delivered a virtuoso performance in [The Vontella Show] , instantly homing in on the fatal flaw in every relationship and obliterating it with highly quotable sass . " In discussion to Tracy 's plot , Rabin opined it was the " weakest of the various threads " in this episode . Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad confessed in his recap that he was going to summarize " Kidney Now ! " as " a little disappointing , but then I hit rewind on my DVR and watched it again and realized , wow , they actually hit all of the season finale notes rather perfectly [...] This episode was quite funny . "

Rick Porter of Zap2it worried how the series would fit in " the likes " of Elvis Costello , Mary J. Blige , Sheryl Crow , Clay Aiken and Adam Levine " without it overwhelming the episode " , and reported that the answer to that " turned out to be ' very effectively . ' " In regards to the storylines , itself , he noted that Jack 's quest in getting Milton a kidney " balanced nicely " with Liz 's story , and that Tracy 's " had some good moments " . In conclusion , Porter wrote " For a show that doesn 't always know how to end episodes , it 's done really well at ending seasons . " TV Guide Magazine ? s Sandra Kofler wrote that the " He Needs a Kidney " song was hilarious , and that it " stole [30 Rock ? s] season finale . " Patrick Goldstein , a contributor for the Los Angeles Times , was favorable to the musical number , reporting " [t] he song itself is a hoot , highlighted by a wonderful spoken @-@ word kidney donation pitch that begins with Costello saying : ' Listen , when someone starts talking in the middle of a song , you know it 's serious . ' " Entertainment Weekly contributor Annie Barrett said " Kidney Now ! " was " sweet and all " , and noted that the " Vontella @-@ as @-@ Tyra spoof " was " brilliant . " Time contributor James Poniewozik wrote that this episode " was a fitting end for a guest @-@ star @-@ heavy ... season of 30 Rock " , but added that the finale overall was " maybe average " , however , " the ending at least delivered the goods , with the best sitcom celebrity benefit song " .