

= Welcome Wagon (Veronica Mars) =

" Welcome Wagon " is the season premiere of the third season of the American mystery television series Veronica Mars , and the forty @-@ fifth episode overall . Written by series creator Rob Thomas and directed by John T. Kretchmer , the episode premiered on The CW on October 3 , 2006 . The series depicts the adventures of Veronica Mars (Kristen Bell) as she deals with life as a college student while moonlighting as a private detective .

In this episode , Veronica transitions to life at Hearst College , meeting several new people and reconnecting with several acquaintances from Neptune High . Meanwhile , a student named Piz (Chris Lowell) gets his belongings stolen , and Veronica helps him . In addition , Keith (Enrico Colantoni) trails Kendall Casablancas (Charisma Carpenter) in the aftermath of receiving a large sum of money from her in " Not Pictured " before learning that she is actually a target of the Fitzpatricks . At the end of the episode , one of Veronica 's newfound friends , Parker Lee (Julie Gonzalo) becomes the next victim of the Hearst serial rapist .

" Welcome Wagon " is the first episode of Veronica Mars to air on The CW as opposed to UPN . In order to attract new viewers , Thomas and the crew decided to make several changes to the show , including altering the theme song and the show 's narrative structure , beginning with this episode . In contrast to previous seasons , which involved one major season @-@ long mystery , the show 's writers planned to have three consecutive mysteries play out over the course of the third season .

The episode also sees the introduction of series regulars Stosh " Piz " Piznarski and Parker Lee as well as the promotion of Cindy " Mac " Mackenzie and Don Lamb to series regular status . Upon airing , the episode received 3 @.@ 36 million viewers and received mixed to positive reviews . Eric Goldman of IGN thought that the episode " proves that the show is as clever and witty as ever " , while Rowan Kaiser of The A.V. Club was critical of the show 's increasing focus on rape .

= = Plot synopsis = =

Veronica starts her criminology class . Veronica solves a mystery given out in the class in six minutes . Logan (Jason Dohring) , who is also at Hearst , is still dating Veronica . Dick (Ryan Hansen) has just returned , getting into Hearst , but he is shaken up from Beaver ? s suicide . Vinnie (Ken Marino) approaches Keith (Enrico Colantoni) with a case , but he denies it . Keith is tracking a bail @-@ jumper . Stosh ? Piz ? Piznarski becomes Wallace ? s (Percy Daggs III) roommate , and Piz loses all his belongings . Veronica comes in to help . Keith ? s bail @-@ jumper , Cormac Fitzpatrick (Jason Beghe) and he gets into the car with Keith . Veronica and Mac listen to a rape victim protesting the university ? s policies on the issue . Soon , Dick crashes the rally . Keith tells Cormac that he helped Kendall (Charisma Carpenter) get out of town , and Cormac is being targeted by the Fitzpatricks . Veronica and Piz visit the police department , and they say there have been other victims . Veronica learns that the Hearst ? Welcome Wagon ? is actually fake .

Veronica meets Parker Lee (Julie Gonzalo) , who annoys both Veronica and Mac . Veronica , Parker , Mac , Wallace , and Piz go to a concert . Veronica talks about Piz ? s problem at the concert , and three kids say that they saw a white girl who was faking being fat . Dick shows up at Mac ? s door and tells her that Beaver never cared about her . Veronica finds Piz ? s guitar , and they visit the seller . The seller ? s description matches that of other people . Veronica talks to Piz about a suspect , but he says that it doesn ? t match the woman he saw . Keith and the bail @-@ jumper ? s car gets stranded . Veronica signs up for the mentoring program in criminology class , and she notices that one of the kids at the concert has a criminal record . Dick gets beaten up when he talks to another man ? s girlfriend , but Logan tases the man . Veronica finds the Welcome Wagon girl , the seller ? s husband .

Piz asks Veronica if Logan is her boyfriend . Keith and the bail @-@ jumper go to Kendall ? s house , and Kendall is romantically involved with the Cormac . They have dinner , but Keith learns that Vinnie is working for Liam Fitzpatrick . When Keith returns , it is too late ? Cormac has already killed Kendall and leaves Keith for dead in the cold night air . A disheveled Dick shows up at Logan ? s door and cries . Veronica sleeps on Mac ? s couch one night , and the next morning , they

awaken to find that Parker has been raped , her head shaved .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

" Welcome Wagon " is the first episode of the series to air on The CW as opposed to UPN . Paul Maguire , the spokesman for The CW , said that the series was picked up because " the critics are behind it and our research has consistently shown that Gilmore shared more audience commonality with Veronica than with any other show from UPN , except Top Model " . Veronica Mars was placed on Tuesdays after Gilmore Girls , with the network hoping for the Gilmore Girls audience to stay tuned for Veronica Mars . Thomas stated that The CW had requested some changes to the show to fit in better with the Gilmore Girls audience : " The network really wants us to be a good companion piece to Gilmore Girls . They 've had a couple of thoughts on storylines that are too dark . " " Welcome Wagon " also introduces a new title sequence for the show . The visuals of the theme song are different , and although " We Used to Be Friends " by The Dandy Warhols was still employed as the theme song , a remix was used instead of the original . Regarding the changes , Thomas elaborated :

Alright , the main titles . Why the change ? As you 'll see here , the previous titles were such a high school aesthetic . It would have felt silly for me to go back to college with the same sort of look ? the notebook paper . So it felt like we needed to change for college anyway . And in season one when we first did the titles , the network was very clear on wanting to sell it as a high school show rather than a noir show . But once we went to college and had a chance to redo the titles I wanted it to feel noir .

For the new theme song , Thomas asked The Dandy Warhols to commission a remix of their original track , which Thomas reported enjoying upon first listening .

Thomas and the crew also introduced several narrative changes to the show starting in the third season . Thomas wanted to " invite new viewers to the show " by " trying to start with a clean slate " and ridding the show of references to former plotlines and character development . With regards to " Welcome Wagon " , Thomas stated that he " wanted episode one this year to not rely much on past knowledge . " He also tried to make the episode " very sort of breezy , and chattery and funny . " The episode reintroduces the case of the Hearst serial rapist , a storyline presented in a second season episode . In contrast to the previous seasons , which had several concurrent mysteries , Thomas planned for season 3 to have three consecutive mysteries , the first of which would be the serial rapist . " To service a 22 @-@ episode mystery , you have to have a large playing field . To service a 9 @-@ episode mystery , we can keep that tighter , more focused . " It was made available on MSN for the week leading up to broadcast . However , the episode was only available for Microsoft users and not for Apple users .

= = = Writing = = =

" Welcome Wagon " was written by series creator Rob Thomas and directed by John T. Kretchmer , marking Thomas 's seventh writing credit for the series and Kretchmer 's tenth directing credit for the show . On September 26 , 2006 , a week before its broadcast on The CW . " Welcome Wagon " features the final appearance by Charisma Carpenter as Kendall Casablancas , who appeared on a total of 11 episodes on the show . The previous summer , when asked about her role in season 3 , Carpenter responded that she would be performing " a little more of the same , with a really , really interesting twist . And it starts the first episode ; you 've got to watch it . You miss the first episode , you 're out of the loop . Gotta tune in right away . "

= = = Casting = = =

" Welcome Wagon " sees the promotion of four actors to star billing , two of whom , Cindy " Mac " Mackenzie (Tina Majorino) and Don Lamb (Michael Muhney) , had previously served as recurring characters , and two of whom , Stosh " Piz " Piznarski (Chris Lowell) and Parker Lee (Julie Gonzalo) make their first appearance in the episode . Thomas revealed that Majorino was going to be a series regular the previous summer , a move that pleased many fans . Asked by Michael Ausiello whether Veronica and Mac would be roommates , Thomas replied that they would not , citing that such a living arrangement would prevent Veronica from having scenes with Keith . Nevertheless , Majorino commented that Mac and Veronica 's relationship would continue to be close throughout the season . " The friendship with Veronica is one of my favorite parts of the entire show . It 's great to have two really strong personalities getting along so well . "

Muhney was told that he would be a series regular in season 3 the previous February , only a few days after his wedding . Muhney was very pleased to be a series regular , comparing his status to becoming a family member in the show rather than " someone who comes over for dinner occasionally . " Piz (Chris Lowell) was named after the director of the show 's pilot episode , Mark Piznarski . He was created in order to give Veronica a male friend who was not upper class . Thomas called Piz a " Lloyd Dobler mold " and " a middle @-@ class kid from a Portland suburb who has too many words coming out of his mouth most of the time . "

Parker Lee serves as Mac 's roommate , with Thomas calling her " everything that Mac is not . " Thomas also said that the character was not created or introduced in a reaction to negative fan opinion towards second season character Jackie Cook (Tessa Thompson) . The episode features the first appearance of teaching assistant Tim Foyle (James Jordan ; Jordan previously played another character , Lucky , in season 2) . In addition , " Welcome Wagon " is the first appearance of the character of Moe Flater . Originally , Michael Cera , who guest starred in " The Rapes of Graff " , was going to play a similar role , but the role of Moe Flater was created after Cera couldn 't take the role due to scheduling conflicts .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Welcome Wagon " received 3 @.@ 36 million viewers , ranking 82nd of 91 in the weekly rankings . This was an increase from both " Normal Is the Watchword " , the second season premiere , which received 3 @.@ 29 million viewers and the second season finale , " Not Pictured " , which garnered 2 @.@ 42 million viewers .

The episode received mixed to positive reviews . Eric Goldman of IGN gave the episode an 8 out of 10 , indicating that it was " great . " He wrote that although " Welcome Wagon " was designed to appeal to new viewers , that it was still a good episode . " ' Welcome Wagon ' , written by Thomas , proves the show is as clever and witty as ever . [?] The more exposition @-@ heavy aspects of the premiere mean the episode isn 't a true standout for the series , but that 's understandable , given what it 's trying to accomplish . " He went on to state that the episode featured more " lighthearted " content before what he predicted would be a return to more dramatic elements . Price Peterson , writing for TV.com , gave a positive review , stating , " Great first episode back ? There was a lot to accomplish in setting up the new environment and characters , but it still felt really organic to the series as a whole . " While criticizing the fact that the rape victims experienced a backlash against them , he enjoyed the characterization of Piz .

Rowan Kaiser , of The A.V. Club , gave a mixed review of the episode , commenting on the show 's increasing focus on rape . He wrote that " There are things that I appreciate about the focus on rape . [?] It 's fairly rare for a show to treat rape from the victim 's perspective . " However , he went on to state that he had " pretty significant issues " with the subject matter as well . He also disapproved of the killer 's choice of victims , setting , and new characters , especially Piz . Television Without Pity gave the episode a " B " . Reviewer Alan Sepinwall was fairly positive towards the episode . He was mixed towards the inclusion of the Kendall @-@ Keith @-@ Cormac storyline in the premiere , but he also praised the new cast members : " Piz and Parker both add new colors to the gang , though it 's hard to say what Parker will be like post @-@ rape . " He eventually called the episode a " pretty good start " .

