

= Hold On to Sixteen =

" Hold On to Sixteen " is the eighth episode of the third season of the American musical television series Glee , and the fifty @-@ second overall . The episode title is from a line in John Mellencamp 's song " Jack & Diane " . Written by Ross Maxwell and directed by Bradley Buecker , the episode aired on Fox in the United States on December 6 , 2011 , and featured the return of Sam Evans ( Chord Overstreet ) to McKinley High and New Directions , and their participation in the Sectionals show choir competition .

Eight songs are covered in the episode , which include three songs originated by members of the Jackson family and performed by New Directions : The Jackson 5 's " ABC " , Janet Jackson 's " Control " and Michael Jackson 's " Man in the Mirror " . The performances were reviewed favorably for the most part , the notable exception being Toby Keith 's " Red Solo Cup " , which was given a mixed reception . The episode as a whole was also given a mixed reception , with some reviewers criticizing the ease and rapidity of Sam 's return , though others felt the show was back on track after developments in recent episodes .

Five of the seven tracks from the episode ? three of four singles , and two of three from the soundtrack album Glee : The Music , Volume 7 ? charted on the Billboard Hot 100 and the Canadian Hot 100 , with the cast 's " We Are Young " debuting at numbers twelve and eleven , respectively , selling 137 @,@ 000 downloads in the United States . Upon its initial airing , this episode was viewed by 7 @.@ 11 million American viewers and garnered a 3 @.@ 0 / 8 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . The total viewership and ratings for this episode were down from the previous episode , " I Kissed a Girl " .

= = Plot = =

New Directions member Quinn ( Dianna Agron ) plans to get Shelby ( Idina Menzel ) fired for sleeping with a student , Puck ( Mark Salling ) . She wants to reclaim Beth , the baby she gave up to Shelby for adoption , and sabotage Shelby 's rival Troubletones glee club prior to Sectionals competition . Rachel ( Lea Michele ) insists that Quinn will ruin Beth 's life if she takes her from her true mother , Shelby .

New Directions needs twelve members to compete , but only has nine with Rachel suspended from school . Finn ( Cory Monteith ) and Rachel travel to Kentucky to ask Sam ( Chord Overstreet ) to come back to McKinley High for Sectionals . Unknown to his parents , Sam is dancing at a strip joint to help pay family expenses ; he wants to return to McKinley , and they agree to let him go . Upon his return , Quinn attempts to reconnect with him to help her reclaim Beth , but he refuses her . He tells his former girlfriend Mercedes ( Amber Riley ) that he intends to woo her back from her new boyfriend , Shane ( LaMarcus Tinker ) . For the final two performers they need , New Directions recruits its bassist and drummer to instead sing and dance .

Blaine ( Darren Criss ) complains to his boyfriend Kurt ( Chris Colfer ) that Finn always dismisses his suggestions in glee club . Sebastian ( Grant Gustin ) interrupts them . With Blaine elsewhere , Kurt warns Sebastian to stay away from Blaine , but Sebastian declares his intention to steal him . Back in the choir room , Blaine suggests some choreography , but Sam wants instead to add moves that " sell sex " . Blaine angrily declares that he is " not for sale " , and storms off . Finn goes after him and finds Blaine pummeling a punching bag . Blaine demands to know why Finn has been so hostile since he transferred to McKinley , and Finn admits he was jealous of Blaine 's talent and apologizes .

Tina ( Jenna Ushkowitz ) is appalled when Mike ( Harry Shum , Jr . ) tells her he will not be applying to dance schools as planned , but has instead applied to Stanford 's pre @-@ med program to please his father . Tina tries to intervene with Mike 's father ( Keong Sim ) , but he remains convinced that dancing is too risky a path for Mike .

Sectionals this year are being held in the McKinley auditorium , and the Unitards ? led by Harmony ( Lindsay Pearce ) ? perform first . Quinn leaves the auditorium to tell Principal Figgins ( Iqbal Theba ) about Shelby and Puck , but Rachel urges her to warn Shelby first . Quinn confronts Shelby , who

tells her that she is resigning from McKinley and apologizes to her . The Troubletones perform next with a mash @-@ up of " Survivor " and " I Will Survive " . New Directions then performs " ABC " , " Control " and " Man in the Mirror " , and Mike and Tina are surprised to see Mike 's father in the audience . Afterward , he tells the couple that he now understands that dancing is Mike 's passion , and Mike should apply to the best dance schools . New Directions wins Sectionals , and the Troubletones come in second .

Quinn decides not to reveal Shelby 's secret for Beth 's sake . She convinces Rachel and the director of New Directions , Will Schuester ( Matthew Morrison ) , to promise to feature the Troubletones members in all future New Directions competitions if they agree to be in the group . She tells Mercedes , Santana ( Naya Rivera ) and Brittany ( Heather Morris ) of the deal , and all three , along with Sugar ( Vanessa Lengies ) , come to the auditorium to join with New Directions in singing " We Are Young " .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Ross Maxwell and directed by Bradley Buecker , and its title comes from a line in John Mellencamp 's song " Jack & Diane " . Filming began on November 2 , 2011 , following completion of the seventh episode the previous day , and finished on November 21 , 2011 . All but the first eight days were shot in parallel with the ninth episode , " Extraordinary Merry Christmas " , which began filming on November 10 , 2011 .

Overstreet , who played New Directions member and football team player Sam Evans in the second season , returns for the first time this season , and will have a multi @-@ episode recurring role . Sam 's parents will appear for the first time in this episode ; his father is played by John Schneider , and his mother by Tanya Clarke . Series co @-@ creator Ryan Murphy also stated that Pearce returns as Harmony in this episode , and Gustin will appear for the second time as Sebastian Smythe , a member of the Dalton Academy Warblers .

Other recurring guest stars appearing in the episode include teacher Shelby Corcoran ( Menzel ) , exchange student and New Directions member Rory Flanagan ( Damian McGinty ) , Troubletones member Sugar Motta ( Lengies ) and Mike 's father Mike Chang Sr. ( Sim ) .

Eight songs are covered in the episode , which include three songs originated by members of the Jackson family and performed by New Directions : The Jackson 5 's " ABC " , with leads by Ushkowitz , Colfer , Shum and Agron ; Janet Jackson 's " Control " , with leads by Kevin McHale and Criss , and a spoken introduction by Agron ; and Michael Jackson 's " Man in the Mirror " , with leads by McHale , Monteith , Salling , Criss and Overstreet . Those three songs are included on the soundtrack album Glee : The Music , Volume 7 . The five other songs are Toby Keith 's " Red Solo Cup " sung by Overstreet ; a mash @-@ up of Gloria Gaynor 's " I Will Survive " and Destiny 's Child 's " Survivor " , performed by the Troubletones featuring leads by Rivera and Riley ; " Buenos Aires " from Evita featuring Pearce ; and fun . ' s " We Are Young " sung by a reunited New Directions . " We are Young " is featured on the soundtrack album Glee : The Music , The Graduation Album .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Hold On to Sixteen " was first broadcast on December 6 , 2011 in the United States on Fox . It received a 3 @. @ 0 / 8 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , and attracted 7 @. @ 11 million American viewers during its initial airing , down from the 7 @. @ 90 million viewers and 3 @. @ 2 / 8 rating / share for the previous episode , " I Kissed a Girl " , which was broadcast on November 29 , 2011 . In Canada , where the episode was broadcast the same day , 1 @. @ 61 million viewers watched the episode , which made it the eleventh most @-@ viewed show of the week , down three slots and 10 % from the 1 @. @ 79 million viewers who watched " I Kissed a Girl " the previous week .

Viewership also declined in the United Kingdom and Australia . In the United Kingdom , " Hold On to Sixteen " was watched on Sky1 two days after its US premiere by 869 @, @ 000 viewers , a decrease of over 20 % compared to " I Kissed a Girl " the week before , when 1 @. @ 09 million viewers were watching . In Australia , " Hold On to Sixteen " was broadcast on February 3 , 2012 . It was watched by 567 @, @ 000 viewers , which made Glee the thirteenth most @- @ watched program of the night , up from fifteenth the week before . The viewership , however , was down slightly from the previous episode , " I Kissed a Girl " , which was seen by 575 @, @ 000 viewers .

= = = Social media = = =

The night the episode debuted , many topics related to the show appeared in the top ten trending topics on Twitter . At one point , Glee executive producer Dante Di Loreto tweeted " 6 trending topics ? ! " , indicating that six of the nine available slots were filled by Glee @- @ related topics , but soon posted a correction : " Ha ! OK , 8 . I forgot # WhiteChocolate was us ! " A review of the episode by Jenna Mullins of E ! Online posted the same evening stated that " within five minutes " of his appearance , the returning Sam Evans was " trending all over Twitter " .

= = = Critical reception = = =

" Hold On to Sixteen " received a mixed reception from reviewers , though the music was more favorably received . Robert Canning of IGN called it " very underwhelming " and gave it an " okay " rating of 6 @. @ 5 out of 10 ; he noted that competition episodes such as this one spend more time on performance , and deemed the non @- @ performance segments " blase " . Rolling Stone 's Erica Futterman characterized " the moral of this week 's story : embrace your youth " as " overkill " , but noted that once the competition began , the episode " succeeded in spite of itself " . Amy Reiter of The Los Angeles Times called it a " feel @- @ good episode " that came as a " huge relief " after the show " had lost its moral footing these last few weeks " , and AOLTV 's Crystal Bell said it gave her " some hope for the rest of the season " . Rae Votta of Billboard summarized the episode this way : " Overall , it was a Glee that felt like the plots were dealt with as fast as humanly possible to cram in as much singing and dancing as we can . "

Many reviewers took issue with the implausible nature of several plot points . Jen Chaney of The Washington Post decried the " lack of basic logic " in Sam being " able to so easily transfer back to McKinley " , Entertainment Weekly 's Abby West pointed out the " considerable amount of paperwork " required for a " minor to move in with noncustodial guardians in another state and register for school " , and Michael Slezak of TVLine was bothered that Sam 's parents did not establish who those guardians would be , and how this would affect him academically . Futterman pointed out that " Mr. Schuester has again failed to pick a set list ahead of time " despite " weeks of pretense about preparing for sectionals " . Both Slezak and MTV 's Kevin P. Sullivan were unimpressed with Quinn 's late @- @ in @- @ the @- @ game thought to apply to so competitive a school as Yale .

There was some puzzlement expressed by several reviewers , including Raymund Flandez of The Wall Street Journal and Votta , as to why Finn would think Sam had been such a great performer to begin with that it was so important to bring him back . Despite that , Votta was pleased by Sam 's return as was Bell , who thought it was one of the more enjoyable aspects of the episode . Sam 's scene with Blaine , however , was met with criticism , but of Blaine 's characterization , not Sam 's : BuddyTV 's John Kubicek pointed out that Blaine " essentially calls Sam a whore " and that " he 's like a completely different person " . Vicki Hyman of The Star @- @ Ledger described the scene as " pretty out of character " for Blaine , and The Houston Chronicle 's Bobby Hankinson said that the entire subplot , including Finn 's antagonism toward Blaine , was " so sloppily assembled " he was glad it was ended in the following scene . The confrontation between Kurt and Sebastian over Blaine was little remarked on ? West enjoyed it , but said she had been hoping for more .

The end of the Quinn / Shelby / Puck triangle and of " crazy Quinn " was celebrated by Bell and Reiter . Several other reviewers , including Kubicek , Slezak and Hyman , were highly critical of

Shelby 's failure to acknowledge that she was in the wrong for sleeping with a student . Canning felt there was no possibility that Quinn would actually ruin Shelby and Beth 's life , since she had failed to follow through in earlier episodes , so her threat to do so lacked drama and was " hollow " .

Although Sullivan was enthusiastic about Shum , who he said had " emerged as a crux of the show " , he was not happy with his character 's " forced storyline " in the episode . Canning noted that Mike 's storyline had " been a bit cliched all season " , though it had been " fun to root for him " , but he was puzzled by the lack of a " Mike Chang dance showcase " at the competition to justify his father 's change of heart .

Rebecca Ford of The Hollywood Reporter was glad that the " tiresome " split glee clubs were now a single group again , though Flandez called the final scene " too neat to be an ending " . While many reviewers , including Reiter , approved of the conclusion of most of the season 's storylines in this episode , Canning called it a " nice little reset button for a season that started off with promise but has failed to deliver of late " , and Kubicek wrote , " With the return of Sam , it 's kind of like the first seven episodes of the season never even happened . "

= = = Music and performances = = =

The episode 's opening musical number , " Red Solo Cup " , was given a mixed reception by reviewers . Chaney called it a " fun change of pace " , though she wasn 't fond of Toby Keith , who originated the song ; Bell admitted she had never been " much of a Sam fan " , but she thought Sam 's version " was pretty great " . Canning called the song a " terrible choice " , and Ford wrote that it " fell unbelievably short " . Futterman credited a " surprisingly natural country twang from Sam " , but added that the " choir room performance feels mostly stale " . Votta could find no sense in its inclusion , and called it the " weirdest song on " Glee " since ' Run Joey Run ' " , while Hankinson was harsher , and declared it to be his " least favorite Glee performance of all time " . West , on the other hand , said the song was " perfect for Sam " , and Overstreet 's " smooth sultry voice nailed it " .

Harmony 's performance with the Unitards received good marks , if not overly enthusiastic ones . Chaney said it was " fine " and gave it a " B " , while Futterman wrote , " Harmony brings Latin flair and proves that she 's legit vocal competition , but the song as a whole has the weird effect of feeling both over @-@ the @-@ top and watered down at the same time . " Kubicek called the performance " fairly forgettable " , while West and Slezak felt that it was not a show @-@ choir presentation , though both gave it a " B + " grade : Slezak termed it a " showcase for a soloist with some jaunty backup dancers " , and West likened it to a " lounge act " . Both Votta and Hyman were impressed with Harmony : Hyman characterized her as " pretty awesome " , and Votta said she was a " fantastic singer " .

Sullivan was amazed that the " I Will Survive " / " Survivor " Troubletones performance " made the mash @-@ up fun for a second time " , and Bell called it " awesome " . Chaney characterized the Mercedes and Santana vocals as " strong " , as did Votta , but both felt it was not as good as the " Rumour Has It " / " Someone Like You " mash @-@ up two episodes prior . Slezak gave the performance an " A " , and said , " I loved that the Troubletones broke free of the standard @-@ operating glee @-@ club choreography , and that there ? s another legendary duet to add to the Sancedes oeuvre . " Flandez wrote that it was " superbly well done and well choreographed " , except for the jumping jacks . Votta thought Blaine and Finn 's triumphant fist bump during the number seemed warranted , though Slezak and Sullivan seemed unconvinced .

The New Directions set of three Jackson family numbers was favorably reviewed by most critics , though they didn 't necessarily agree on which songs were most effective . Bell couldn 't decide whether she enjoyed these three songs or the Troubletones mash @-@ up more , and West felt the " choreography on the whole thing was stellar " , and graded it an " A + " . Votta singled out " ABC " , which demonstrated " what a lovely singer Tina is " , and Kubicek said he enjoyed it " mostly because Tina deserves more singing time , and I love the fact that Mike is now an actual singer who gets his own solos " . Chaney called it " a solid performance " and gave it a B + , while Futterman wrote that it " felt like a flashback to the New Directions ' group performances of yesteryear , when it

was all about an over @-@ the @-@ top , feel @-@ good attitude " . The dancing in " Control " was highlighted in many reviews : Hyman and Slezak were complimentary , but Chaney wrote that the " choreography seemed a little awkward and occasionally out of synch " , that it was " the least effective of the three Jackson numbers " and added that for her " this felt dated when it could have been retro @-@ fresh " ; she graded the song a " C " . However , Futterman made mention of the " slick dance moves " , and Votta noted that the " jazz band guys " were " holding their own with the background dancing through the whole number " . However , for Kubicek , the song " definitely brought down the energy at the middle of their performance " . Bell characterized the final song as " an amazing ' Man in the Mirror ' cover " , and Chaney said it was " the best of their three songs " , and gave it an " A ? " . However , Slezak wrote that it " proved to be a tonally jarring ending to the performance " .

" We Are Young " was received with near @-@ universal enthusiasm . Slezak called it " totally joyous fun " and Chaney said it was " the most effortlessly joyful moment of the night " ; the two handed out " A ? " and " A " grades respectively . Futterman felt it was performed " with silly spirit " , and was " another throwback to simpler and successful Glee moments " . Hankinson thought it was the best musical number of the night , even if " it was more than a little reminiscent of their performance of ' Dog Days Are Over ' " , but Kubicek thought the earlier song was " a million times better " . West called it a " great closing song " , and Votta said " the finale singing was the best kind of ' Glee ' " .

= = = Chart history = = =

Three of the four singles released from the episode , which included a total of five cover versions thanks to the " Survivor / I Will Survive " mash @-@ up , debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 , including the Glee Cast 's sixth @-@ highest song ever on that chart as of that date , " We Are Young " , which debuted at number twelve on sales of 137 @,@ 000 downloads in the US . It had a " Hot Shot Debut " on the Canadian Hot 100 , and charted higher than in the US at number eleven . As of March 7 , 2012 , the song had sold " 360 @,@ 000 digital copies " . In the United States , the aforementioned " Survivor / I Will Survive " debuted at number fifty @-@ one , and " Red Solo Cup " debuted at number ninety @-@ two ; in Canada , the two songs debuted at number forty @-@ seven and number ninety @-@ nine , respectively . In addition , two of three covers from the episode that were only made available on the soundtrack album Glee : The Music , Volume 7 ? which was released the same day as the episode was broadcast ? appeared on the Hot 100 : " Man in the Mirror " at number seventy @-@ six , and " ABC " at number eighty @-@ eight . This made a total of five debuts on the Hot 100 . The same two songs also appeared on the Canadian Hot 100 : " Man in the Mirror " at number eighty @-@ four , and " ABC " at number ninety @-@ three , which also totalled five debuts on that chart . Neither " Buenos Aires " nor " Control " appeared on these US or Canadian charts .

The original versions of two of the songs covered in the episode also charted on the Hot 100 that week . " We Are Young " by fun. featuring Janelle Monáe debuted in the United States at fifty @-@ three and in Canada at sixty @-@ nine . Toby Keith 's " Red Solo Cup " had already been on those charts , but was cited as the greatest " digital gainer " on both of them , and rose to seventeen in the United States from thirty @-@ five , and twenty @-@ nine in Canada from sixty @-@ eight . Subsequently , " We Are Young " was featured in a Super Bowl commercial , and became the first song by the originating artist to reach number one on the Billboard Hot 100 after appearing on the show , attaining that position on the chart for the week of March 17 , 2012 .