

= Brown Betty (Fringe) =

" Brown Betty " is the 20th episode of the second season of the American science fiction drama television series Fringe , and is the only one of the series performed as a musical . The episode was written by co @-@ showrunners Jeff Pinkner and J. H. Wyman , and consulting producer Akiva Goldsman . It was directed by filmmaker Seith Mann . As the episode begins with Peter 's continued disappearance , Walter consoles himself by smoking a strain of marijuana called " Brown Betty . " Most of the episode is then told from his drug @-@ addled perspective , in which Olivia is a 1940s noir detective and Peter is a conman who ran away with Walter 's glass heart .

The episode first aired in the United States on April 29 , 2010 on the Fox Broadcasting Company and was seen by 5 @.@ 551 million viewers in the United States . The episode was part of the network 's " Fox Rocks " campaign , in which musical elements were incorporated into various shows in their lineup for a week , a concept that was panned by critics before the episode aired . Nevertheless , " Brown Betty " garnered mostly favorable reviews , with many noting the musical element as a strong point . Various cast members also stated that they enjoyed the musical aspect of the episode . It was ranked the fourth best episode of the entire series by Entertainment Weekly .

= = Plot = =

The episode begins with Dr. Walter Bishop (John Noble) smoking his own strain of marijuana called " Brown Betty " while Olivia Dunham (Anna Torv) attempts to find his son , Peter (Joshua Jackson) , who disappeared at the end of the previous episode after learning Walter stole him from a parallel universe . Because Dunham 's sister Rachel (Ari Graynor) is unavailable , she brings her niece Ella (Lily Pilblad) to the lab for Walter and Astrid Farnsworth (Jasika Nicole) to look after . To pass the time , Walter tells Ella a detective noir story in which Olivia is a private investigator .

In the story , Rachel approaches Olivia to find her boyfriend , Peter , who has gone missing . During the investigation , Detective Phillip Broyles (Lance Reddick) leads her to Massive Dynamic , where the CEO Nina Sharp (Blair Brown) informs her that Peter is a conman and industrial spy . Later , Rachel is found murdered , with her heart taken . Olivia finds a check signed by Walter Bishop , who in the story , is an inventor that has created " everything that is wonderful in the world " in order to benefit humanity (hugs , rainbows , bubblegum , singing corpses) . Questioning Walter , Olivia learns that Peter worked with Walter , who treated him like a son . One day , Walter made a glass heart but Peter later stole it . Were the heart not to be found , Walter and his ideas would die . To help find Peter , Olivia calls her assistant , " Esther Figglesworth " (Farnsworth) .

Later , Olivia follows Nina Sharp , only to find herself kidnapped by a " watcher " (the Observer , played by Michael Cerveris) working for Sharp . The watcher attempts to kill Olivia by placing her in a wooden crate and sending it out to sea . Fortunately , Olivia is rescued by Peter . After taking her to his hideout , he reveals that the glass heart was his by nature of having been born with it , and that after working with Walter , Peter loved him enough to donate it to him . However , he took it back after learning a terrible secret behind his inventions : they were stolen from children 's dreams and replaced with nightmares . Later , the house is under attack by an army of watchers . Olivia fights them off , but not before they manage to take Peter 's heart with them . After placing batteries in his heart cavity to act as a temporary measure , Olivia discovers that Walter set up the attack . In the confrontation , Walter apologises for his misdeeds and promises to change . However , Peter does not forgive Walter and leaves him , ending the story .

Ella is disappointed by the ending , as that is not how she believes stories ought to end , so she proposes an alternate ending : when Walter says he can change , Peter believes him and splits the glass heart in two , and together they " lived happily ever after . " At the episode 's end , Olivia returns , having found no leads on Peter 's location . Farnsworth returns Walter to his home , where the Observer watches from a distance and notes Peter 's disappearance .

= = Production = =

The episode was originally called " Overture " , but was later changed to " Brown Betty " as a reference to Walter 's marijuana habit . It was written by executive producers Jeff Pinkner and J. H. Wyman along with consulting producer Akiva Goldsman . Seith Mann served as the director , his only directional credit for the series . For Sweeps Week , the Fox network announced the " Fox Rocks " campaign , in which various shows within their lineup were encouraged to produce musical episodes in the same vein as the sophomore show Glee . Along with Fringe , Family Guy , Bones , The Simpsons , and a few other Fox series took up the musical theme . The episode was already in development before Fox 's announcement . Jeff Pinkner stated that the music was not in the original plan for the episode , but was added to fit into Fox 's sweeps stunt . As the episode occurred after the big reveal of Peter 's true identity (" The Man from the Other Side ") , the writers knew they wanted " Brown Betty " to explore the aftermath from Walter 's damaged psyche . Fox did not ask for a full @-@ blown musical , but requested that some music be integrated into the episode in any shape or form . Pinkner elaborated :

" We came up with a narrative device to really explore Walter 's feelings . We had largely all the elements of the episode in place and Fox called and said , ' Hey , how would you guys feel about if we asked you to have some musical element in the show ? Anything , like just feature a song playing . ' They didn 't ask us to do Glee . And we instantly , before we got off the phone , said , ' Well , this is what we 're thinking for the episode and here 's an idea how that could work for us . ' We turned their request into what felt like a positive for us and really deepened and sort of blew the episode out even further in the direction we were already taking it " .

The episode begins with Walter smoking his own strain of marijuana while listening to " Roundabout " by the band Yes . The scene was originally removed out of concern it would be airing on network television , but was later reinserted because " the story itself had so many different genres playing . We had a noir element . We had a musical element. and it just really played funnier coming from an altered state of Walter " , according to co @-@ producer Tanya Swerling . Jeff Pinkner added " We set out to do an episode that explored Walter 's state of mind ? he 's dealing with some very upsetting news . When we realized that the way Walter would deal with such news would be to try to anesthetize himself with copious amounts of marijuana , well , singing and dancing became a natural outcome . " Music supervisor Charles Scott IV and J.R. Wyman are big Yes fans , and consequently chose the song that appeared in the opening scene . As the episode was done with a 1940s aesthetic , every department had to act accordingly . Torv 's normally straight hair was placed into a curl hairdo fashionable for the time period , and lighting changes were made to reflect the period as well . New furniture was brought in for various sets , such as Walter 's lab and Nina 's office at Massive Dynamic , which was then removed in preparation for the following week . The ending was a challenge for the producers , as it was supposed to end with Ella 's version of the story conclusion and Walter still feeling upset over Peter 's absence , but they felt this ended making viewers feel depressed . They debated ways to make it a happier tone , so Wyman added the Observer scene to change the feeling of the episode , and prepare viewers for next week .

As guest actor Leonard Nimoy , who plays William Bell , was unavailable to shoot the brief conversation with Blair Brown 's Nina Sharp , the producers knew they wanted to do something a little more creative for the scene . They talked to cartoonist Frank Miller and hired a special effects school to do all the modeling , which they accomplished based on photos of Nimoy , because the actor could not come in to have his head scanned ; he did some voicework however . The finished scene included an animated version of Nimoy 's head , shown through the same window as the one used in " Peter " .

Pinkner thought the added musical element improved the episode , because it gave insights into each of the characters ' psyches . According to Wyman and Pinkner , the " episode was supposed to be a fantastical episode in the first place , and so the music supports the storytelling " . Wyman continued in a different interview with the Los Angeles Times that " Noirs traditionally are morality tales , and that 's kind of what we 're doing . We felt that that was a great way to get across Walter 's mind frame and where his head is at right now , with his son missing " . Other cast members also praised the added music . John Noble wrote " It really deepened and blew the episode out even further in the direction we were already taking . We get [Walter 's] fractured take on the world and

his condition now that Peter has left . The music really supports the storytelling " . He added , " It is like a mind @-@ trip of Walter 's . It is Walter trying to grapple with the fact that his son is gone " . Jasika Nicole continued : " I have a musical theater background , so I 've been waiting for some moment in some realm of where I am in TV and film for this to happen and , you know , of course , when Glee came on the air I was like , ' Great , that was my chance , ' and I 'm in this show , which I love this show , but I 'm never going to sing and dance in this show . And I did ! It 's so awesome ! " Swerling called it " the longest and possibly most difficult episode of the season " to create .

As with other Fringe episodes , Fox released a science lesson plan for grade school children focusing on the science seen in " Brown Betty " , with the intention of having " students learn about fingerprints and how they can be collected and used as evidence to identify an individual . "

= = = Music = = =

The co @-@ music supervisor , Billy Gottlieb , called the episode a " little mini feature film in the sense that we had a lot of camera performances with the music . " In order to get the best performances out of the cast and be able to shoot the scenes in various different ways , the producers had the actors go into a music studio in Vancouver and record their respective musical numbers . According to Gottlieb , the actors were very nervous about singing in the episode , despite their parts being around a mere 40 seconds . Actor Joshua Jackson , who plays Peter Bishop , was adamant that he not sing in the episode , despite the fact he frequently sings on set , causing him to be one of the few cast members with no musical part . As the original script contained no musical number for Jasika Nicole , she emailed Jeff Pinkner specifically asking him to let her sing , which he then approved . Some critics noted their surprise that Tony Award @-@ winning actor Michael Cerveris did not sing in the episode . The producers were initially going to have him sing Django Reinhardt 's " Blue Moon " , but changed their minds because they thought it would be better to keep the Observer out of the musical aspect of the episode . Despite the pre @-@ recordings , the audio used in the episode was taken from the actors actually singing on set . Tanya Swerling believed the recordings were not a wasted effort however , as it helped make the actors more comfortable about singing on set . At the end of shooting , Gottlieb believed " everybody was great ... they could jump on stage and do Broadway and it wouldn 't be a problem for any of them " . He and other crew members called Jasika Nicole " probably the most accomplished " musical person of the cast . As one of the episode writers , Akiva Goldsman chose the Stevie Wonder song " For Once in My Life " .

On composing the episode 's score , Chris Tilton cited Chinatown as a big influence , and commented " the idea was to have this noir feel but still not be totally away from Fringe " .

The episode featured excerpted music from the following tracks :

Yes ' " Roundabout " , heard in background

Tears for Fears ' " Head over Heels " , also sung by Walter and lip @-@ synched by Rachel

Traffic 's " Low Spark of High Heeled Boys " , played on piano and sung by Broyles

A Chorus Line 's " I Hope I Get It " , sung by Astrid

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory 's " The Candy Man " , sung by the singing corpses and later by Walter

Miles Davis ' " Freddie Freeloader " , played at the Peter house

Stevie Wonder 's " For Once in My Life " , sung by Olivia

Ella Fitzgerald 's " Blue Moon " , heard in background and also danced by Peter and Olivia

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Brown Betty " was watched by 5 @.@ 551 million viewers in the United States , with a 3 @.@ 4 share out 5 among all households and a 2 @.@ 0 / 6 share of the audience aged 18 ? 49 . The

episode fell five percent from the previous week .

== = Reviews == =

The episode premiered to generally positive reviews . Although initially cringing over the musical premise , Ramsey Isler of IGN called the episode " admittedly fun " because it " gave us an indirect window to view how Walter feels about himself " . In a review of the DVD , another critic from IGN later called it the " worst overall episode " of the season however , asking the question " Musical numbers and Olivia Dunham : who thought this would be a good idea ? " Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly was also initially irritated after hearing Fox 's musical plans , and consequently gave " Fringe a lot of credit for pulling off this hour so cleverly " Jennifer Walker from TV Fanatic thought the episode was " bizarre " to watch ; it " held our interest for the entire 60 minutes , but really failed to introduce any new information about Peter and the unknown man that has crossed into our dimension " . MTV 's John Wigler loved the " noir " element , and thought " each and every participating " Fringe " cast member exhibited great musical ability . Overall , it was a very solid effort on everyone 's part " . Jane Boursaw of TV Squad loved the scenes between Walter and Ella , and thought " it was downright brilliant to create a story within a story " . While he praised the episode 's production and the singing abilities of the cast , Kurt Anthony Krug of Mania.com wrote a negative review : " All in all , what was supposed to be a fun filler episode before the question of where Peter went at the end of the last episode when he found out he was the Peter from an alternate reality ? one of the turning points in the show ? s mythology ? fell flat " . Sarah Stegall of SFScope enjoyed it , writing " There was just enough music , and just enough dance , to season this story without overburdening it " . She praised the risktaking it took to make the episode " edgy and whimsical , casting aside the concrete conventions of television storytelling ... Not only was it entertaining , but it moved the storyline forward on some important emotional fronts , as the characters deal with Peter 's disappearance in ways that protect them , but reveal as well " .

Andrew Hanson from the Los Angeles Times also was impressed with the cast 's singing abilities , and praised the writers ' risk @-@ taking : " that just goes to show how well thought out , creative , and just plain fun tonight ? s ? Fringe ? really was . A lot of people would have pegged a 1940s film noir musical episode as a big risk , but the bigger the risk , the bigger the pay out " . Rhee Dee of Pinkraygun.com commented " After the revelation in the last episode , and Peter running away , this episode was a great way to express Walter ? s grief and guilt about this whole situation without actually watching Walter talk about how sad and guilty he feels about everything . Walter ? s story serves as a powerful metaphor for how he actually feels " . Tim Grierson of New York Magazine thought the episode turned out to be simply mediocre because " its noir elements weren ? t incorporated in a really interesting way , and as for the musical numbers , they tended to be throwaway bits , save for ? fictional ? Dunham crooning ? For Once in My Life ? to the seemingly dying ? fictional ? Peter near the episode ? s end " . Grierson continued that " If a show is going to completely throw away its usual rulebook for a fun onetime @-@ only episode , it would be great if the writers could come up with a story as audacious as their premise . But aside from some Chinatown references , fancy threads , and mildly clever mirroring of the show ? s mythology ? Massive Dynamic is up to no good in this story @-@ land world as well ? ' Brown Betty ' wasn ? t all that enjoyable because it didn ? t do a great job of capturing what generally makes Fringe enjoyable " .

Noel Murray of the The A.V. Club graded the episode an A- , while Television Without Pity gave it a C + . Jeff Jensen of Entertainment Weekly named it the fourth best episode of the series , explaining " The late season lark that officially launched a tradition for similar stunts , the musical film noir homage ' Brown Betty ' ... was an offbeat gem that expressed all of Fringe 's core themes ? redemption , connection , rehumanization ? and encapsulated the key relationships (the slow @-@ moving Walter @-@ Peter reconciliation ; Peter and Olivia 's carefully tended soul @-@ deep romance) more poignantly than most on @-@ point episodes of Fringe , and it left fans wanting the show to keep pushing the innovation . It could never do it enough . " In a similar list , Den of Geek named it the ninth best episode of the series , explaining that " it shouldn ? t work , and yet it does ,

because although technically nothing happens , the episode shows us just how deep Walter has sunk into a metaphorical pit of despair and guilt , making himself the villain in his own story and despairing of ever being forgiven . It also gives the audience a refreshing break from some of the high level angst of the end of the season , allowing Peter and Olivia to act out a properly romantic storyline while their characters in the ? real ? world have been torn apart . Also , there are singing corpses in it . Only on Fringe . "

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

" Brown Betty , " along with Music Editor Paul Apeltgren , was nominated for Best Sound Editing : TV Short Form Music in a Musical by the Motion Picture Sound Editors for the 2011 Golden Reel Awards . " The Box " , a season three Fringe episode , was also nominated for Best Sound Editing : TV Short Form Music . " Brown Betty " lost to an episode of Glee .