

= Apollo , Apollo =

" Apollo , Apollo " is the sixteenth episode of the third season of American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 52nd episode of the series overall . It was written by executive producer Robert Carlock and directed by Millicent Shelton . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company ( NBC ) network in the United States on March 26 , 2009 . Guest stars in this episode include Adam West and Dean Winters .

The episode is set on the fiftieth birthday of Jack Donaghy ( Alec Baldwin ) , and much of the plot revolves around his concerns with his age and desire to reclaim the happiness of his childhood . At the same time , Liz Lemon ( Tina Fey ) is forced to deal with her ex @-@ boyfriend Dennis Duffy ( Winters ) and his self @-@ diagnosis as a sex addict as well as the fact that Dennis slept with her close friend Jenna Maroney ( Jane Krakowski ) . A final plotline in the episode involves the desire of Tracy Jordan ( Tracy Morgan ) to travel in space , and the efforts by Liz and Jack to deceive him into thinking he has done so .

" Apollo , Apollo " was generally well received by television critics . According to the Nielsen Media Research , the episode was watched by 7 @.@ 2 million households during its original broadcast . " Apollo , Apollo " was nominated for four Primetime Emmy Awards and won for Outstanding Single @-@ Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series . Robert Carlock won the Writers Guild of America Award for Episodic Comedy for his work on this episode .

= = Plot = =

The episode begins with an announcement by Tracy Jordan ( Tracy Morgan ) on television that he plans to travel to outer space , and is willing to pay up to thirty million dollars to do so . Jack Donaghy ( Alec Baldwin ) agrees to help Tracy with his dream of traveling in space , promising to call his friends at NASA . Instead of doing this , however , he asks The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan ( TGS ) producer Pete Hornberger ( Scott Adsit ) to create a fake space experience for Tracy . Pete and the TGS crew construct a model space shuttle and place Tracy in it after disorienting him by flying him in a helicopter blindfolded . The deception is a success , and Tracy believes that he is , in fact , flying in space .

At the same time , Liz Lemon ( Tina Fey ) is visited by her ex @-@ boyfriend , Dennis Duffy ( Dean Winters ) , who informs her that he is a sex addict , now atoning for his past errors . Liz is unimpressed and asks Dennis to leave , before going to work . Later , after arriving at work , Liz answers Jenna Maroney 's ( Jane Krakowski ) cellphone , and is surprised to find that Dennis is calling Jenna . Liz pretends to be Jenna and discovers that Jenna and Dennis slept together . Liz is determined not to let this revelation affect her friendship with Jenna , so the two go to confront Dennis about his behavior . During the confrontation , Liz discovers that Jenna and Dennis actually slept together in her bed , leading her to resent Jenna 's actions . As a result , she fails to tell Jenna about an improperly attached piece of equipment , leading Jenna to injure her leg .

Meanwhile , Jack 's fiftieth birthday is approaching and he has received home movies of some of his earlier birthdays from his mother , Collen Donaghy ( Elaine Stritch ) . While watching the tapes , Jack discovers just how happy he was when he was younger , and is determined to reclaim that happiness and innocence . After examining a list he made while he was younger , he discovers that he has done all of the things but one , befriending Batman . Thus , he arranges for actor Adam West , who played Batman , to come to his birthday party . At the party , however , West calls Jack by the wrong name , leading him to realize that he is in fact unhappy , despite his accomplishments . In an effort to reclaim his happiness , Jack attempts to find the same toy that made him so happy on his tenth birthday , a model of an Apollo Lunar Module . He buys one from a vintage toy store , but still remains unhappy .

Later , Liz apologizes to Jenna for allowing her to be injured , and agrees to let Jenna tell the TGS writing staff about her role in an advertisement for a phone sex line . The writers find the ad online , and greatly enjoy watching it . Jack comes in while the writers are watching and laughs so hard that he vomits . The laughter lifts Jack out of his bad mood , and he tells Liz what an important friend she

is .

= = Production = =

" Apollo , Apollo " was written by executive producer Robert Carlock , making it his eleventh writing credit after " Jack the Writer " , " Jack @-@ Tor " , " The Source Awards " , " Cleveland " , " Jack Gets in the Game " , Episode 210 , " Subway Hero " , " Sandwich Day " , " Believe in the Stars " , and " Generalissimo " . This was Millicent Shelton 's first 30 Rock directed episode , and would later return to helm the fourth season episode " Floyd " . Shelton had spent two years in negotiations with the show 's producers before she was hired to direct this episode . " Apollo , Apollo " originally aired in the United States on March 26 , 2009 , on NBC as the sixteenth episode of the show 's third season and the 52nd overall episode of the series .

In this episode of 30 Rock , actor Dean Winters reprised his role as Dennis Duffy , a former boyfriend of Liz Lemon , for the sixth time , having appeared in " Jack Meets Dennis " , " Tracy Does Conan " , " The Break @-@ Up " , " Subway Hero " , and " Cooter " . Actor Adam West played himself on the show , in which he introduces Jack Donaghy by the wrong name at Jack 's fiftieth birthday party . Liz 's phone sex line commercial , the full @-@ length version , is featured on 30 Rock 's season three DVD as part of the Bonus features .

In a scene in " Apollo , Apollo " , Jack wonders what it would be like to see the world through NBC page Kenneth Parcell 's ( Jack McBrayer ) eyes , revealing that Kenneth sees everyone as Muppets . To accommodate this , Sesame Street puppeteers Joey Mazzarino , Carmen Osbahr , and Matt Vogel were brought in to do the muppet versions of Jack , Liz , and Tracy Jordan . This angle would later be used again in the show 's fourth season episode " Dealbreakers Talk Show " in which Kenneth appears as a muppet while walking by a high @-@ definition camera . In addition , the program was parodied by Sesame Street , in the show 's 39th season , entitled " 30 Rocks " .

Star Wars is frequently referenced in 30 Rock , beginning with the pilot episode in 2006 where Tracy is seen shouting that he is a Jedi . Liz admits to being a huge fan of Star Wars , saying that she had watched it many times with Pete Hornberger , and dressed up as the Star Wars character Princess Leia during four recent Halloweens , and while trying to get out of jury duty in Chicago . Star Wars is also referenced when Tracy takes on the identity of the character Chewbacca . In " Apollo , Apollo " , Tracy reveals to Liz and Jack that going into space has been a childhood dream of his , and that when he is there , he would like to kill the Ewok . Tina Fey , the series creator of 30 Rock , a fan of Star Wars herself , said that the weekly Star Wars joke or reference " started happening organically " when the crew realized that they had a Star Wars reference " in almost every show " . Fey said that from then on " it became a thing where [ they ] tried to keep it going " , and that even though they could not include one in every episode , they still had a " pretty high batting average " . Fey attributed most of the references to Carlock , whom she described as " the resident expert " .

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen Media Research , an average of 7 @.@ 2 million viewers watched " Apollo , Apollo " during its original United States broadcast , placing it in third place for its timeslot . The show also claimed a 3 @.@ 4 rating / 8 share among viewers aged 18 to 49 , meaning that 3 @.@ 4 percent of all people in that group , and 8 percent of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . This was an increase from the previous episode , " The Bubble " , which was watched by 7 million American viewers .

" Apollo , Apollo " was generally , though not universally , well received among critics . Television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @-@ Ledger wrote that the episode was " easily the best 30 Rock of the season , and one of the series ' best episodes to date " . He complimented Robert Carlock for " [ zooming ] in on the narcissistic worldview " of the Dennis character as it " cranked those qualities up to appropriately absurd 30 Rock proportions " . In addition , Sepinwall wrote that all of the elements featured in the episode " all came together " . Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad

was similarly laudatory , writing that it was " one of the most explosively hysterical and imaginative half hours of TV this season , and one of this show 's best episodes ever " . Time contributor James Poniewozik was favorable to the episode , observing that it was " [ e ] asily the funniest 30 Rock in months , and probably the whole season . " Poniewozik said it " nailed it , from the too @-@ many @-@ good @-@ jokes ... to the sweet heart at the center of each character . " The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin enjoyed Adam West 's cameo , but noted that Tracy 's plot " felt awfully shticky and sitcommy to me . " He opined that " Apollo , Apollo " was " pretty great " for Jane Krakowski 's Jenna , and in conclusion , Rabin said " I had initially pegged this episode as good but not great and essentially minor in the grand scheme of things but while writing this post I came to realize just how much of it I loved . 30 Rock is pretty great even when it 's not that great . " Rick Porter , a contributor for Zap2it , said he " loved " the episode , writing that it made " perfect sense " for Kenneth to see everyone around him as muppets , and noted that Liz 's commercial was a " strong ending " to the episode .

Margaret Lyons of Entertainment Weekly agreed that the episode was " another solid 30 Rock " , but was somewhat less positive , writing that it " didn 't quite slay me like the last few episodes have . " In addition , Lyons was not thrilled with the Jenna character , reporting " It 's been a long time since we 've seen Jenna do something redemptive ? and I 'd settle for anything not strenuously vacant and narcissistic . I get that that 's her bit , but ... that note is starting to drive me crazy . " IGN contributor Robert Canning also delivered a mixed review of the episode , writing that he laughed " quite a bit " but said it ultimately " felt like it could have been so much more . " Canning also concluded his review by stating that it " fell shy of being an absolute classic . " Writing for The Palm Beach Post Kevin D. Thompson said " While last night 's episode was far from unwatchable , it wasn 't one of the show 's best , either . But as I 've written before , a so @-@ so 30 Rock is still better than 99 percent of TV 's other so @-@ called comedies . " Thompson noted that he was not thrilled with the return of Dean Winters as Dennis , and called his plot with Liz and Jenna " the show 's least interesting plot " .

= = = Accolades = = =

" Apollo , Apollo " received four Primetime Emmy Award nominations , winning one ; Millicent Shelton received a nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series , Robert Carlock received a nomination for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series , Matthew Clark received a nomination for Outstanding Cinematography for a Half @-@ Hour Series nomination , and Ken Eluto won for Outstanding Single @-@ Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series at the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards .

At the February 2010 ceremony for the Writers Guild of America Awards , Carlock won for Episodic Comedy , tying with Modern Family 's Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd for their work on the pilot episode . Eluto garnered the American Cinema Editors " Eddie " Award for Best Edited Half @-@ Hour Series for Television . In addition , " Apollo , Apollo " was nominated for the ADG Excellence in Production Design Award for Half Hour Single @-@ Camera Television Series .