

= Premiere ( The O.C. ) =

" Premiere " ( also known as " Pilot " ) is the series premiere of the television series The O.C. , which premiered on the Fox network on August 5 , 2003 . Written by series creator Josh Schwartz and directed by executive producer Doug Liman , the episode depicts the introduction of troubled teenager Ryan Atwood ( Benjamin McKenzie ) into the wealthy lifestyle of the Cohen family in Newport Beach , Orange County , California .

The casting directors , Patrick J. Rush and Alyson Silverberg , began selecting the principal cast eight to ten weeks before filming started . The role of Ryan was particularly hard to cast . Seth Cohen ( Adam Brody ) was based on Schwartz 's experiences at the University of Southern California as a " neurotic Jewish kid from the East Coast in a land of water polo players " . Other central characters in the episode are Seth 's parents ? Sandy ( Peter Gallagher ) and Kirsten ( Kelly Rowan ) ? and teenage next @-@ door neighbor Marissa Cooper ( Mischa Barton ) .

The series premiere led the first half @-@ hour of its time slot in viewership . It was generally well received by critics , and earned Schwartz a Writers Guild of America Award nomination for Best Screenplay in an Episodic Drama . Rush and Silverberg received an Artios Award nomination for excellence of casting in the Dramatic Pilot category . Originally broadcast and released in a 1 @. @ 33 : 1 aspect ratio , it was remastered in a widescreen ratio for the series DVD , released in November 2007 . The episode was released on MiniDVD on April 26 , 2005 , and is available to purchase from video on demand services .

= = Plot = =

A cold open shows Trey Atwood ( Bradley Stryker ) and his brother Ryan stealing a car . The police chase and arrest the boys , resulting in a prison term for Trey and a short stay in juvenile hall for the underage Ryan . A conversation between Ryan and his public defender , Sandy Cohen ( Peter Gallagher ) , establishes Ryan as a smart boy with a rough upbringing ; he has three truancies and two suspensions , but his SAT I scores are in the ninety @-@ eighth percentile . When Ryan 's mother , Dawn ( Daphne Ashbrook ) , collects Ryan , Sandy gives his business card to the boy . At home in Chino , Dawn asks Ryan to leave , and her boyfriend , A.J. ( Ron Del Barrio ) , expels him from the house . Standing at a payphone with nowhere to go , Ryan calls Sandy for help . As Sandy drives Ryan to his house in Newport Beach , the opening credits and the theme tune play ? unlike the other episodes , there is no title sequence .

While Sandy tries to convince his wife , Kirsten ( Kelly Rowan ) to allow Ryan to stay in the pool house for a night , Ryan meets the girl next door , Marissa Cooper ( Mischa Barton ) . When her boyfriend Luke ( Chris Carmack ) picks her up , Marissa invites Ryan to attend a fashion show fundraiser the following night . On a sailing trip the next day , the Cohens ' son , Seth ( Adam Brody ) reveals to Ryan that he has a crush on Summer ( Rachel Bilson ) and would like to sail to Tahiti with her , but that she never pays him any attention . Later , Marissa leaves for the fashion show with her mother Julie ( Melinda Clarke ) , her father Jimmy ( Tate Donovan ) , and her younger sister Kaitlin ( Shailene Woodley ) . The Cohens and Ryan also attend the show .

Summer invites Ryan to a party after the show , and Ryan convinces Seth to join him . For the first time , Seth is introduced to the sex- , drug- , and alcohol @-@ fueled side of Newport . He experiences the wildness of a party for the first time , while Ryan flirts with Marissa . Luke takes a girl to the beach . Later at the party , Ryan rebuffs an intoxicated Summer , but Seth misinterprets the encounter and reveals Ryan 's real background . Seth walks down the beach , and is bullied by a group of water polo players that includes Luke . Ryan defends Seth by punching Luke , but Luke 's friends intervene and beat up Ryan and Seth . After returning to the Cohens , Ryan sees that Marissa 's friends left her passed out on her drive ; he carries her to the Cohens ' pool house to sleep . When Kirsten finds Seth and Ryan asleep in the pool house the next morning , she is unhappy with Ryan 's new influence and insists to Sandy that Ryan leaves . Sandy drives Ryan back to Chino , but when they find his home empty , they return to Newport .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

In 2002 , Schwartz met with Joseph " McG " McGinty Nichol and Stephanie Savage of production company Wonderland Sound and Vision . They told Schwartz they wanted to create a television show based in McG 's hometown of Newport Beach . Savage suggested producing a police or extreme sports 21 Jump Street @-@ style show , but Schwartz knew little about the genre . Having had experience with people from Newport Beach during his time at the University of Southern California , Schwartz came back to them with his own characters . The show was pitched to Fox and Warner Bros in August 2002 . Fox targeted a summer launch for the show , and Doug Liman was brought in to direct the premiere after McG withdrew due his scheduling conflicts with Charlie 's Angels 2 . The show was confirmed for the 2003 ? 2004 schedule in May , and an August 5 , 2003 broadcast date was selected in June .

= = = Casting = = =

Casting directors Patrick J. Rush and Alyson Silverberg began casting the main roles eight to ten weeks before filming began , with input from Schwartz , McG and Savage . Rush and Silverberg were later nominated in the Dramatic Pilot category of the Casting Society of America 's Artios Awards .

In February 2003 , Peter Gallagher became the first actor cast , playing Sandy Cohen . Kelly Rowan auditioned five times before being cast as Sandy 's wife , Kirsten , in March 2003 . Rush found the role of Ryan Atwood particularly hard to cast , as the producers wanted the " perfect " actor . Benjamin McKenzie was only invited to audition for the role after Warner Bros. made them aware of the actor following his unsuccessful audition for a UPN sitcom . McKenzie joined the cast in March 2003 . He lacked working experience and later described his selection as " a tremendous leap of faith " on the producers ' part . The role of Seth Cohen was derived from Schwartz 's experiences at the University of Southern California as a " neurotic Jewish kid from the East Coast in a land of water polo players " . Adam Brody first read for the part of Ryan , but found the bad @-@ boy image did not suit him . In a recall for the role of Seth , Brody lost the producers ' interest by ad @-@ libbing much of the script ; he joined the cast in March 2003 after a second interview .

Mischa Barton , who had met McG on Fastlane , portrayed Marissa Cooper . She was cast in February 2003 . Tate Donovan , who played Jimmy Cooper , was cast in March 2003 . Melinda Clarke guest @-@ starred as Julie Cooper , but read for the role of Kirsten in her audition as there were not enough scripted lines for Julie at the time . Rachel Bilson , who was recommended to Schwartz after an unsuccessful audition for Everwood , guest @-@ starred as Summer Roberts , whom the producers had envisaged as a tall Californian blonde . Clarke and Bilson joined as regular cast members later in the season . Chris Carmack , who played Luke Ward , was credited as a guest star for the episode ; he joined the regular cast in the next episode .

= = = Filming = = =

Although the show is set in Newport Beach , financial penalties imposed for filming outside the " Thirty Mile Zone " forced production to the Manhattan Beach , Los Angeles County region . The scenes set in Ryan 's hometown of Chino were filmed in Los Angeles . The show was predominantly shot on 35 mm film stock . Unusually for the show , a scene in the Atwood home in Chino was shot using a hand @-@ held camera by Liman . Savage said this ensured the show " doesn 't feel like glossy soap opera " .

The Cohen family home was shot on location in Malibu . A mock pool house was built for use in the pilot , and taken down after filming completed . The Cohen 's home was recreated on a soundstage at Raleigh Studios in Manhattan Beach for filming during the rest of the series ; external shots of the

house remained in use . The fashion show was filmed at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre ; though it did not advance the story , Schwartz described it as necessary to show the world in which the characters lived . The party at Holly 's beach house following the fashion show was filmed at a beach house in Malibu over three consecutive nights .

= = Broadcast and distribution = =

The episode premiered at 9 : 00 p.m. ( EDT ) on August 5 , 2003 on Fox , and was simulcast in Canada on CTV . Fox gave the show an early summer premiere to try to establish an audience before the network switched to coverage of post @-@ season baseball in October , and ahead of " the clutter of the fall preview weeks " . In the United Kingdom , the episode first aired at 9 : 00 p.m. ( GMT ) on March 7 , 2004 on Channel 4 , and in Australia on the Nine Network . The episode was released on MiniDVD on April 26 , 2005 , after release plans with other Warner Bros. titles for March were discarded . Although the premiere was originally broadcast and released in a 1 @.@ 33 : 1 aspect ratio , it was remastered in a widescreen ratio for the Region 1 complete series DVD release . The Region 2 release retained the original aspect ratio . The episode is available on video on demand service Amazon Unbox in the United States , and from the iTunes Store in the United States and United Kingdom .

= = Reception = =

The pilot episode attracted 7 @.@ 46 million viewers in the United States , second in its time slot behind the season finale of Last Comic Standing . The O.C. received a rating / share of 6 @.@ 8 / 11 in the first half @-@ hour , ranking first between 9 and 9 : 30 p.m. , but lost the lead in the second half @-@ hour with a rating of 6 @.@ 7 / 10 . The episode received the highest rating of the night in the 12- to 17 @-@ year @-@ old demographic , but in its target audience demographic of 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , it received a less @-@ than @-@ expected Nielsen Rating of 2 @.@ 9 / 8 . The show built on the audience of lead @-@ in show American Juniors , and Fox said that they were " fairly happy with the show 's performance " . Schwartz received a Writers Guild of America Award nomination for Best Screenplay in an Episodic Drama , with casting directors Rush and Silverberg nominated in the Dramatic Pilot category of the Artios Awards . The episode was criticized by City Manager Glen Rojas for its " negative portrayal " of Chino .

Entertainment Weekly 's Carina Chocano praised The O.C. for being different , claiming that it was " refreshingly free of both [ Aaron ] Spelling @-@ style camp and the twee earnestness that has characterized more recent teen dramas " . Robert Bianco of USA Today drew comparisons with the successful Fox show Beverly Hills , 90210 , saying that " The O.C. is better @-@ written and better @-@ acted by a cast that just might be , incredibly enough , even better @-@ looking " . He praised the cast 's skill and attractiveness as well as the show 's ability to " come up with a few smart deviations from the genre norm " . Nancy Franklin of The New Yorker criticized the plot for being too predictable , but praised Adam Brody as Seth , stating that " he talks too much and too fast , he mumbles , and he projects zero physical confidence . In short , his character is adorable . " Rob Owen of the Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette felt that " [ Benjamin ] McKenzie , at times , is prone to overdramatizing scenes " , and considered the young characters " so detestable and yet bland " that it made the show " almost painful " to watch . He nevertheless affirmed that the show had " positive attributes " that made it enjoyable . Andrew Grossman of The Boston Globe commented that " Brody is instantly likable as Seth " and that Barton " does a nice job with Marissa 's torn @-@ between @-@ two @-@ worlds angst " , but stated that Ryan " doesn 't seem to have many clear personality traits " . Tim Goodman of the San Francisco Chronicle called the episode " superb " and described McKenzie as " essentially playing James Dean " . He compared the actor to Russell Crowe and noted that McKenzie " pull [ ed ] the whole thing off with aplomb " .

= = Popular culture = =

Luke 's line , " Welcome to the O.C. , bitch " , which he says after beating up Ryan , became a tagline for the show . TV Land placed the line as 83rd in its 100 Greatest TV Quotes and Catchphrases in 2006 . Hadley Freeman of The Guardian noted that the teen @-@ focused show made many cultural references due to a " renewed interest in the teen market " , adding that the use of cropped tops , micro @-@ minis , and beaded flip @-@ flops showed a " decidedly West Coast approach to fashion " . The episode 's cultural references to fashion included Julie Cooper 's question to her pre @-@ pubescent daughter , " Do you like my hair this straight or is it too Avril Lavigne ? " , while another mother complains , " What are you doing putting my daughter in Calvin Klein ? She was supposed to be in Vera Wang ! " Teenage misfit Seth complains that " Every day 's a fashion show for these kids " .

The episode generated interest in the program 's music and was regarded as " the show to be heard on " . Michael Peck from TV Guide said that he received a large quantity of mail that inquired about the song " Into Dust " by Mazzy Star , which played when Ryan carried Marissa into his bedroom . Other featured music was The All @-@ American Rejects ' 2003 hit , " Swing , Swing " , and " Hands Up " by The Black Eyed Peas from their 2003 multi @-@ platinum album , Elephunk . Among Schwartz 's favorite musical moments from the show was Joseph Arthur 's " Honey and the Moon " , which Schwartz claimed helped him write the pilot . The title track " California " introduced the band Phantom Planet into the mainstream .