

## = Debasement Tapes =

" Debasement Tapes " is the seventeenth episode of the third season of the American mystery television series Veronica Mars , and the 61st episode overall . Written by John Enbom and directed by Dan Etheridge , the episode premiered on The CW on May 8 , 2007 . 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 , Piz ( Chris Lowell ) gets the chance to interview one of the members of his favorite band , a washed @-@ up rock star named Desmond Fellows ( Paul Rudd ) . However , when Desmond 's backing tapes that he needs for the show the next night disappear , Veronica is called in to find them . Meanwhile , Logan ( Jason Dohring ) enlists Mac 's ( Tina Majorino ) help in creating a presentation for his business class . In addition , Keith ( Enrico Colantoni ) learns that Vinnie Van Lowe ( Ken Marino ) is challenging him in the upcoming Sheriff election .

" Debasement Tapes " features a guest appearance by Paul Rudd . A friend of series creator Rob Thomas and Enbom , they had hoped that Rudd would guest star on the show since its inception in 2004 . Announced four months prior to the episode 's airing , his appearance was highly anticipated by Thomas , who had high hopes for the pairing of Rudd and Enbom . In its original broadcast , the episode received 1 @.@ 85 million viewers and mostly positive reviews from television critics , with Rudd 's performance and the various subplots being generally well @-@ received , although some disliked the main mystery .

## = = Plot synopsis = =

Veronica and Wallace ( Percy Daggs III ) watch a movie at her house . She questions him about Piz ? s mood , while Keith enters and says he is currently unopposed in the Sheriff election . Piz runs up to Veronica and states that he has been chosen to be a guide for a rock star named Desmond Fellows . However , his show depends on some tapes Desmond is carrying with him , but when Piz checks him into his hotel room , they are missing . Piz calls Veronica for the case and runs into Logan in the elevator . Desmond points to several potential suspects . Logan asks Mac for study help , and he agrees . Piz starts his show with Desmond , and it goes terribly , as Desmond makes racial epithets and sexual advances . Veronica and Piz track down a teacher , who denies involvement , but the pair find a flyer for a group that threatened to boycott Desmond ? s show . Piz and Desmond talk about his past and start to make progress , but he ends up going to a party with Dick ( Ryan Hansen ) instead of playing guitar with Piz .

Logan and Mac continue to make progress on his business school report , but Mac has to call Max ( Adam Rose ) to continue . Desmond goes skinny dipping at his party , while Mac and Max flirt in front of Logan . Veronica discovers that Desmond ? s bag was actually switched with another person ? s . Veronica and Piz retrieve it , and on the car ride home , they briefly discuss their kiss at the party before playing a CD with some of Desmond ? s unreleased newer material . Keith reconnects with Leo D ? Amato ( Max Greenfield ) , who presents a case involving the Fitzpatricks to him . They stake out where the Fitzpatricks are , and Keith sees Vinnie Van Lowe helping them . However , they quickly learn that Vinnie is actually investigating the case and has trapped them in the store . Veronica and Piz supposedly get stuck in traffic and tell Desmond to play some of his newer songs until they get there , but they actually are at the concert venue and just want him to expose the audience to his solo material .

Desmond plays a show entirely of new songs , and the crowd loves it . Piz tells Desmond that he was there the whole time , but he does not react negatively . Mac , Max and Logan finish their report , but the professor cuts Logan off in the middle and dislikes it . Leo becomes a deputy again , while Vinnie enters the Sheriff ? s office and states his intention to run against Keith in the special election .

## = = Production = =

" Debasement Tapes " was written by John Enbom and directed by supervising producer Dan Etheridge , marking Enbom 's seventeenth and final writing credit for the show and Etheridge 's first and only directing credit for the series . The episode guest stars actor Paul Rudd as former rock star Desmond Fellows . During casting of the character of Vinnie Van Lowe , Rudd was considered to play the part ; however , the role was given instead to Ken Marino , who appears in the episode . Marino and Rudd are friends in real life . Rudd was a friend of Enbom and Etheridge , and he had been signed on to appear in the episode by the airing of " Spit & Eggs " . They had lobbied Rudd to come on the show for several years . Thomas described the reason for Rudd not appearing earlier being that the crew were unable to find a good moment for the character 's entry that worked with Rudd 's schedule .

Series creator Rob Thomas thought that the character would be a perfect role for Rudd , stating that he would perform it in a British accent and had high expectations for the comedy of the episode because it was being written by Enbom . However , Thomas did not release any details about Rudd 's plot line in the episode before its airing . Rudd compared his character to Andrew Ridgeley and Peter O 'Toole . In the scene in which Veronica meets Desmond , the film of camera angles while Kristen Bell was speaking were inadvertently destroyed , leading to these camera angles being filmed nearly six weeks later . Bell had to speak her lines without Rudd present .

The scene in which Desmond goes nude swimming was not included in the same form in Etheridge 's version of the episode ; however , Thomas enjoyed the take that was eventually used more , so he put it in the final cut . Because the show could not show full nudity , they gave the stunt performer who was filling in for Rudd flesh @-@ colored swim briefs and put him out of focus so they could notify the network that the man out of focus was indeed clothed . The lights that can be seen in the distant background of the scene illuminating the bay were placed nearly ten miles away by grips .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original broadcast , " Debasement Tapes " received 1 @.@ 85 million viewers , ranking 96th of 98 in the weekly rankings . This was a moderate decrease from the previous episode , " Un @-@ American Graffiti " , which earned 2 @.@ 35 million viewers .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received mostly positive reviews from television critics , with Rudd 's performance and the various subplots being generally well @-@ received , although some disliked the main mystery . Eric Goldman of IGN graded the episode a 7 @.@ 8 out of 10 , indicating that it was " good " . He generally praised Rudd 's performance and the case @-@ of @-@ the week , but he was critical of its ending , stating that " after last week , it was a bit too much of another ' and that 's one to grow on ' conclusion . " He was also mixed towards the episode 's subplots , enjoying Mac 's romantic storyline but disliking Logan 's continued interest in Veronica . He also referred to Vinnie running for Sheriff as " a bit ridiculous " . Reviewer Alan Sepinwall , on his blog What 's Alan Watching ? , lauded the episode , particularly Rudd 's performance . He stated that Rudd , despite playing a stock character , " made me feel like I hadn 't seen it a thousand times before . " He also enjoyed the pairing of Mac and Max , while he believed that the impact of Vinnie and Leo 's reappearances was blunted by the knowledge that the show would likely not return for a fourth season . Television Without Pity graded the episode a " B " .

The Los Angeles Times praised Rudd 's performance while criticizing his storyline and the mystery @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week . While stating that Kristen Bell is usually the scene stealer , the reviewer thought that Rudd took on that role in this episode . However , the reviewer called his mystery " an excuse just to get Rudd on the screen . " Missy Schwartz of Entertainment Weekly was also positive towards the episode particularly Rudd 's performance and the episode 's subplots .

While criticizing the case @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week 's ending as anticlimactic , she thought that Rudd 's singing was better than expected . The reviewer also lauded the comedic portions of the subplots , particularly the scene in which Dick compares himself to a lion and Mac and Veronica compare their romantic interests to cafeteria food . Brill Bundy of Zap2it was mostly positive towards the episode , particularly praising Rudd 's comedic timing and the episode 's use of supporting series regulars such as Mac and Piz . He also commented positively on the development of the romantic storyline between Piz and Veronica , stating that it was realistic . However , the reviewer did not think that the mystery involving Rudd 's character was necessary and that it would have been better to not have a mystery at all .

Stereogum referred to the opening scene of the episode as " Rudd generally being awesome . " Cortney Martin , writing for the Houston Chronicle , was mixed overall . While being complimentary towards Rudd 's performance and Greenfield 's reappearance , the reviewer disliked the mystery of Desmond 's missing tapes , stating , " the mystery of the week turns out to be the lamest non @-@ mystery of the show 's entire run , I think . " The reviewer opined that the subplot involving the Fitzpatricks was boring but that Marino 's reappearance was a good surprise . Brian Raftery of Idolator believed that Rudd 's character could have been based on a number of different real @-@ life figures but guessed Courtney Love and Matthew Sweet as potential influences .

Rowan Kaiser of The A.V. Club praised the episode as the best of the season so far . He lauded the development of the romantic storylines of both Veronica and Mac , while stating that Veronica 's was more realistic , describing the concert scene in which Veronica and Piz hold hands again was genuinely emotional . He also stated that Rudd " changes Fellows from a painful stereotype into a pantheon one @-@ off character . " The reviewer also opined that the episode 's combination of Rudd and the subplot involving Logan and Mac created a very entertaining episode that was exemplary of how well the new story structure could work .