

Episodes marked with an asterisk (*) indicate that the story idea was by David Mitton.

Salty's Secret

Written by Robin Kingsland

A really good start to the new decade (and century and millenium, by extension) by introducing us to Salty, someone who's now a staple of the CGI series. In the current era, he does come off as a bit of a laid-back sort without a lot going for him, whereas here, he's shown to have some degree of vulnerability. Salty loves being beside the sea, and being separated from it for a while gives him a bit of separation anxiety. But even then, he still puts his desires aside to get on with his work, which is a good lesson to teach.

Rating: Excellent (9/10)

Harvey to the Rescue

Written by Jonathan Trueman

Getting the elephant in the room out of the way, Edward being judgemental towards Harvey just doesn't fit his character at all. However, it is only one line in the episode, and compared to a later episode, that's nothing and doesn't harm the episode in the long run. It still has a very strong message about appearances not mattering at all; being different can be a good thing and it makes you feel special. It's probably one of the best takes about judging others before you get to know them (and I'll get to one of the worst soon enough). Also, it was nice to see Thomas not being rude to Harvey, most likely having learned from when he first met Terence. Again, that doesn't impact the episode much, but it's a nice little tidbit there.

Rating: Excellent (9/10)

No Sleep for Cranky

Written by Paul Larson

I find it highly unlikely that Cranky would never get any sleep due to working too hard, especially since in later episodes, he's shown to be sleeping at night. Even stranger was how Salty, Bill and Ben don't seem to suffer insomnia from staying up all night due to the former's stories. It's entertaining to watch, but this episode was the first sign of Paul Larson being an inconsistent writer, a reputation that lingers on to this day.

Rating: Okay (6/10)

A Bad Day for Harold (the Helicopter)*

Written by Simon Nicholson

It's got nothing to do with the episode, but the "helicopter" part of the title for the UK is redundant; we know Harold's a helicopter, so why say it? The episode still provides a good lesson about not overestimating your abilities, and it's nice to see Percy and Harold's friendly-rivalry in play here. I haven't got much else to talk about here.

Rating: Good (7/10)

Elizabeth the Vintage Lorry/Quarry Truck

Written by Paul Larson

Out of series six's newbies, Elizabeth is the only one not to appear in CGI, but it would be nice to see her return to the show, maybe as a foil to Sir Topham Hatt's antics? They were mentioned to have a past together, but that's never been capitalized upon. Plus, she has a fantastic, no-nonsense personality, and the roads could use more grumpy vehicles to add more diversity. The story itself is okay, and... that's pretty much all I can say, really.

Rating: Okay (6/10)

The Fogman*

Written by Jonathan Trueman

If there's anything episodes like this prove, you don't need to strictly adhere to Awdry's writings in order to make the show good. This episode, however, does have that Awdry vibe in regards to a bit of railway safety about working in fog as well as its message; don't fix what isn't broken. In this case, Sir Topham Hatt thought it'd be simpler to replace Cyril with a foghorn, but the avalanche proved why Cyril was the better option. Kind of feels a bit like a metaphor for what happens when meddling executives think they know best when they don't. Ah well; hindsight is such a wonderful thing, eh Mattel?

Rating: Excellent (10/10)

Jack Jumps In

Written by Phil Fehrle, Jonathan Trueman and Abi Grant

It's a shame that a spin-off based around the Pack was never built upon, but it was most likely to avoid competing with Bob the Builder, another Hit Entertainment property, and in which case, I can understand why. It would be nice to see what the scrapped episodes were like, but I think we can be glad with what we got. Plus, we got five of the original members in CGI, so it's better than nothing. Anyway, this episode was a great introduction to the Pack and had a great moral about taking care in dangerous workplaces and not jumping in where you don't belong. It even has a greater message about standing up to bullies, something *Apology Impossible* failed to do.

Rating: Excellent (10/10)

A Friend in Need

Written by Phil Fehrle, Jonathan Trueman and Abi Grant

If *Jack Jumps In* was a great introductory episode, then this episode is a fantastic conclusion to Jack's first character arc. It was nice seeing him learn from his mistake in the previous episode and he further redeemed himself in the end by saving Thomas from a potentially horrific accident. While I didn't mention it in the previous episode, it was nice to get a glimpse on each of the Pack members to see what their personalities are like; Max being the bully, Kelly being the mentor figure, Ned being well-meaning but clumsy, etc.

Rating: Excellent (10/10)

It's Only Snow*

Written by James Mason

This was the first episode of the show to mention "Winter Holidays" instead of the correct term Christmas, something that would eventually call attention to Hilary Fortnam in 2011, but that's a subject for when I get to *Keeping Up with James*. The long and short is that they should've stuck with Christmas between 2002 and 2012, because trying to make a holiday that's all-inclusive doesn't work when the holiday on display is very obviously Christmas. Regardless if it's a Christian holiday, they could've easily avoided that controversy altogether and everyone would be happy, even the non-Christians. Religious ranting aside, the episode itself isn't that bad, though Thomas should've gotten over his hatred for his snowplough by now, but I digress. That being said, his determination to give the villagers their Christmas tree despite his replacement snowplough breaking was admirable.

Rating: Good (7/10)

Twin Trouble

Written by Brian Trueman

Another classic series sin that carries over onto later series; Donald and Douglas constantly bickering like there's no tomorrow. I know they have to give them a character flaw to make them more interesting, but we've already got Bill and Ben filling that role. Heck, previous episodes have shown the Scottish twins having differing personality traits; Donald being a bit more fierce-tempered and stubborn and Douglas being more sensitive and caring. How are those traits not interesting and yet something as stereotypical as a constant twin rivalry is? This episode was just *One Good Turn* but adapted in order to fit Donald and Douglas. Okay, granted it does stand out more by showing them have a bit of separation anxiety (mostly Douglas) and displaying their individual personalities, but episodes like this prove why Donald and Douglas are best suited as secondary characters. They don't always need starring roles just for the sake of having one.

Rating: Okay (5/10)

The World's Strongest Engine*

Written by Paul Larson

Okay, help me out here; Henry has had an accident and has to go to the works. And his replacement is... Diesel? And instead of taking mainline trains, Diesel works at the docks, a role that was probably already filled by Salty by now! How does that make any sense? Especially if you consider that Sir Topham Hatt was hoping for Diesel being a proper dockyard diesel, but his recent behavior had proved him wrong. If he had appeared in the TV series by then, it would've made much better sense to have Class 40 make a return and hate the idea of pulling trains, or, since he was supposedly planned to appear in series six, have Diesel 10 resent the fact that he's replacing a steam engine on goods trains and would rather work passenger trains instead? There's a lot you could've done with that, but instead, we get a story full of inconsistencies. At least Diesel became a more permanent fixture in the series.

Rating: Bad (3/10)

Scaredy Engines*

Written by Robin Kingsland

Another bad episode that spawned another later series cliché; Percy being a scaredy engine (at least until *Tale of the Brave* and series 18 did away with it for good before being resurrected again for *Three Steam Engines Gruff*). It made sense back in *Thomas, Percy and the Dragon* since he was alone by himself on a siding, but this episode directly contradicts it by having Thomas tease Percy for being scared, almost making him come off as a hypocrite. This would've worked a lot better as Diesel's main role for series six, since he's known for teasing other engines for being scared, only for karma to come back and bite him hard. The episode does provide great character moments between Percy and Duck, especially given their past interactions in series two and three, which I think salvages things slightly, though it's never really explained what became of the important job at the smelters. The episode just ends with Thomas and Percy looking at the fireworks and... that's where it stops.

Rating: Bad (3/10)

Percy and the Haunted Mine*

Written by Robyn Charteris

Again, Percy is a scaredy engine here, and it makes even less sense since he's been to Maithwaite before and after (even at night, if I recall correctly) and was never once frightened of going there. Sure, the episode does explain it, but it still hurts continuity. It does have its funny moments like Percy crying out "Bouncing buffers!" and the moral about understanding that not everything is scary when you understand the context is a good one, but otherwise, not an episode I'd rewatch very often.

Rating: Okay (4/10)

Middle Engine*

Written by Brian Trueman

...no. Just no. This episode is awful on so many levels. It's so insistent on dumping all over Percy that he's basically the world's chew toy. First, he's made a middle engine by Arry and Bert (now reduced to generic bullies rather than the Grim Messengers of Doom merchandise makes them out to be) and instead of shunting the trucks away and rearranging them correctly, he just delivers his trucks stuck in the middle and being the subject of ridicule by James. It gets worse for Percy when he's accidentally shunted onto the coal loading ramp by Henry and gets the blame for being reckless while Henry gets away with it all. And then Sir Topham Hatt just dismisses Percy explaining himself and sends James to work with Arry and Bert, who also ends up being a middle engine. Sure, James needed to be knocked down a peg for teasing Percy, but the little green engine doesn't get any sort of justice for how he's constantly picked on by the world around him. And that's not even getting into how Arry and Bert get away scot-free and that the episode just... stops. Overall, it feels like one massive hate letter towards Percy.

Rating: Terrible (-3/10)

James and the Red Balloon*

Written by Jenny McDade

Coming off the heels of one of the worst ever episodes, we get one of the best. Having Thomas and James feeling threatened by the idea of the hot air balloon is something unique for the show; we could certainly do with more aircraft in the show. The red balloon's theme is lovely too, and it really adds to the beauty of the episode. I'm honestly surprised that it, of all things, had a song dedicated to it. It's still got funny moments like James screaming as the balloon falls on him and his steam accidentally re-inflates it. I love this episode.

Rating: Excellent (10/10)

Jack Frost*

Written by Paul Larson

A bit like *Scaredy Engines*, only set in winter and James was more fitted to the role. Not a hugely flawed episode, but it's not really a great one either. To be honest, I'm not really sure why this of all episodes gets merchandise.

Rating: Okay (6/10)

Gordon Takes a Tumble*

Written by Robin Kingsland

That crash is one of the most over-the-top of the show. Not the worst, mind you, just the most over-the-top. I mean, how was Gordon able to travel as far as he did on the farm without slowing down? I know realism isn't a huge factor into the show's writing, but surely he could've slowed at the haystacks by the time he hit the tires and never went through the shed? It's still a good episode overall with lessons about not taking teasing seriously and listening to warnings.

Rating: Good (8/10)

Percy's Chocolate Crunch*

Written by Brian Trueman

I've always enjoyed this episode, especially the accident at the end when Percy emerges covered in chocolate. I always laugh at that, though it was never said what happened to some of the workmen at the chocolate factory, though that's a nitpick to an otherwise great watch, and the moral about usefulness before cleanliness was great.

Rating: Excellent (9/10)

Buffer Bother

Written by Ross Hastings

It feels a lot like *Twin Trouble*, right down to Bill's accident at the end, only the story was more fitting for Bill and Ben. Being jealous over something your sibling will be getting is kind of understandable, but it's pretty pointless since Ben's new buffers were never seen after this episode. It's not a hugely flawed episode, but there's not much point to it in the long run.

Rating: Okay (5/10)

Toby Had a Little Lamb

Written by Jenny McDade

This is probably one of the purest episodes of the show, and it suited Toby's character really well. His determination to get to the newborn lambs despite the danger of the old rickety bridge is something to be admired; desperate times call for desperate measures.

Rating: Excellent (9/10)

Thomas, Percy and the Squeak*

Written by Jenny McDade

It should just be called *Thomas and the Squeak* since Percy was barely involved other than just being a butt monkey over being dirty before getting to take Alicia Botti despite being dirty. Speaking of which, why was Gordon's "peasant" comment about Percy changed for the US dub? It's not like it could offend anyone there, though it does kill the humor about Percy misunderstanding it as "pleasant". Though Gordon's comment "definitely a coloratura" as a response to Alicia Botti's screaming is certainly worth a laugh. Overall, a nice little story with some good humor.

Rating: Good (7/10)

Thomas (and) the Jet Engine*

Written by Ross Hastings

People complaining about the newer series being unrealistic shouldn't really complain if they love this episode, one that I should point out, of course, is loaded with unrealistic moments. I could write a full-length essay about every unrealistic moment this episode suffers from, but to make it short, Thomas could've likely ended up at the works for a long time if he derailed at the first bend being pushed by the jet engine before he even left Brendam docks. It's a crazy episode for sure, and whether you think that's a good thing or not will depend on how much unrealism you can take. If you're so bothered about that, you could easily take your children to a heritage railway; Thomas shouldn't be the only thing when it comes to teaching kids about railways.

Rating: Good (8/10)

Edward the Very/Really Useful Engine

Written by David Mitton

It's not a bad episode overall, but it's a typical "Edward proves his worth" story, with a bit of influence from *Super Rescue* from the Railway Series. In fact, Edward doesn't really show any character there; he's just really bland there and says two lines, which are practically nothing that any other character outside of Gordon couldn't have said. It feels very mandated just to give Edward a starring role. Episodes like this are why I don't mind him being out of the Steam Team. Edward can't carry an episode on his own and a lot of his roles are just him proving his worth to the bigger engines.

Rating: Okay (6/10)

Dunkin Duncan

Story by Simon Nicholson; written by Jenny McDade

It feels strange that there's a four truck limit on the incline when there have been more than that since this episode aired, but then again, it could've been because of Peter Sam's accident that a limit was imposed. It was still a nice episode regardless about Duncan learning to be patient and careful when working there. Not much else to talk about here.

Rating: Good (8/10)

Rusty Saves the Day*

Written by Paul Larson

What a mess of an episode; did no one think about giving this episode a rewrite or two? Why would the entire Skarloey Railway be closed down and the engines just work at the quarry? The quarry is part of the railway, so by that logic, wouldn't that have been closed down as well? Heck, how did it go from serviceable to outright decrepit so quickly? And why would Sir Topham Hatt close it down without regarding the impact of this action? Even the title is wrong; Elizabeth helped in saving the line (and it took longer than a day, I should point out), so wouldn't it have been called *Elizabeth Helps Out* instead? The moral about helping others in need is good, but the execution is just sloppy all around; events of a story should drive the moral and not the other way around. That's what I believe happened here when it came to this episode.

Rating: Bad (2/10)

Faulty Whistles*

Written by Ross Hastings; loosely based upon "Mike's Whistle" by The Rev. W. Awdry

Ah yes, the original *Mike's Whistle* adaptation, although very strange in a lot of places. Probably the first being that they bothered to adapt an Awdry story despite not bothering to do so from series five onward. Peter Sam's whistle being knocked out by a branch doesn't really make much sense to begin with - unless it was loose - so it might've worked had it simply damaged Peter Sam's whistle so he couldn't use it. For Duck, it worked better since his driver used his whistle to cook eggs for supper, causing it to make a strange sound and becoming the subject of ridicule. It's also odd that despite needing to take the organ to Strawberry Grove, Duncan returns with the organ in tow - unless it was dangerous for him to head home without a whistle? It's an okay adaptation overall, but the CGI version is far superior on many levels.

Rating: Okay (6/10)

Episode Rankings

1. James and the Red Balloon - Excellent (10)
2. A Friend in Need - Excellent (10)
3. Jack Jumps In - Excellent (10)
4. The Fogman - Excellent (10)
5. Percy's Chocolate Crunch - Excellent (9)
6. Toby Had a Little Lamb - Excellent (9)

7. Harvey to the Rescue - Excellent (9)
8. Salty's Secret - Excellent (9)
9. Thomas the Jet Engine - Good (8)
10. Gordon Takes a Tumble - Good (8)
11. Dunkin Duncan - Good (8)
12. A Bad Day for Harold the Helicopter - Good (7)
13. Thomas, Percy and the Squeak - Good (7)
14. It's Only Snow - Good (7)
15. Elizabeth the Vintage Lorry - Okay (6)
16. No Sleep for Cranky - Okay (6)
17. Faulty Whistles - Okay (6)
18. Edward the Very Useful Engine - Okay (6)
19. Jack Frost - Okay (6)
20. Twin Trouble - Okay (5)
21. Buffer Bother - Okay (5)
22. Percy and the Haunted Mine - Okay (4)
23. Scaredy Engines - Bad (3)
24. The World's Strongest Engine - Bad (3)
25. Rusty Saves the Day - Bad (2)
26. Middle Engine - Terrible (-3)

Final Series Rating: 170/260 (6.5/10)

Series Rankings So Far

1. Series 2 (Excellent; 233/260 - 8.9/10)
2. Series 3 (Good; 211/260 - 8.1/10)
3. Series 1 (Good; 208/260 - 8/10)
4. Series 6 (Good; 170/260 - 6.5/10)
5. Series 5 (Okay; 165/260 - 6.3/10)
6. Series 4 (Okay; 159/260 - 6.1/10)