

shooting a pilot

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Director Mike Figgis Detained for Threatening to "Shoot a Pilot"

I'm not exactly sure how the word "pilot" came to mean "initial episode of a TV show," but it's definitely a part of the general lexicon by now. "Did you watch that new series called People on an Island?" is what I might ask you, and your response very well could be "Yeah, I watched the pilot but I couldn't get into it." So you understand the word "pilot" in this context, right? Good. Maybe you should get a job at Los Angeles International Airport.

It's funny because I'm kind of surprised it hasn't happened before: Director Mike Figgis was going through security at LAX when he was asked the reason for his visit. "I'm here to shoot a pilot," was his response. Obviously he meant "I'm here to shoot the first episode of a TV series that may or may not be picked up for broadcast distribution," but what the immigration official thought he meant was "I'm here to shoot an airplane pilot with a gun." Yikes! The director of Leaving Las Vegas, Timecode and Internal Affairs was then detained for about five hours until immigration officials could get online and figure out that, yep, "pilot" has more than one meaning.

Good thing the immigration officers didn't ask him about his body of work. Figgis' answer might have been "I recently made a huge bomb."

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