

= The Convict =

" The Convict " is the ninth episode of the third season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's 37th overall . It first aired on November 30 , 2006 in the United States on NBC . The episode was the series ' only original script written by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant , who are the creators of the original British comedy series of the same name . It was directed by Jeffrey Blitz , his first such credit of the series .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton and Stamford branches of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Michael Scott (Steve Carell) discovers that an employee named Martin Nash (Wayne Wilderson) , who came with the branches ' recent merger , was previously in prison . Michael becomes frustrated when Martin 's stories of prison sound better than working in the office . Meanwhile , Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) plays a prank on Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) by giving incorrect information to Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) on how to impress her .

According to Nielsen Media Research , an estimated 9 @. @ 07 million viewers watched " The Convict " on its first broadcast , making it up to that point the largest audience of the season . Among adults aged 18 to 49 , it earned a 4 @. @ 4 / 11 ratings share , finishing in eighteenth place for the week among all the major networks . Television critics were largely positive towards the episode , particularly Carell 's " Prison Mike " sequence as well as Helms ' performance as Andy Bernard .

= = Synopsis = =

Michael Scott (Steve Carell) learns that black employee Martin Nash (Wayne Wilderson) is a former criminal , and tells the entire office . During this time , in a misguided effort to avoid issues of stereotyping and racism Michael asks the employees to name a white person that they trust and he will name a black person he trusts even more . The name Jesus pops up and Michael replies with Apollo Creed . Meanwhile , Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) encourages Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) to pursue Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) , and intentionally gives him information about her strong dislikes . Later , Andy strums " The Rainbow Connection " on his banjo while singing falsetto . Pam smiles politely and silently shares the joke with Jim .

Martin tells the others he was incarcerated for insider trading , and that he enjoyed certain perks of prison , including outside time and art classes . Pam comments that prison sounds better than their current work situation . Attempting to convince his employees that the office is better than prison , Michael sends everyone to " outside time " in the bitter cold . He then calls a meeting in which he adopts the persona of " Prison Mike . " Martin comments that Michael 's performance did not remind him of his time in prison . This further infuriates Michael , who then locks all of the staff inside the conference room . In order to have his co @- @ workers released , Toby Flenderson (Paul Lieberstein) tells Michael the staff is simply teasing him . After letting the workers go , a relieved Michael relents , but Martin chooses to quit .

= = Production = =

" The Convict " was written by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant , the co @- @ creators of the British comedy series of the same name . It was their first original script for the American series , after years of creator and executive producer Greg Daniels imploring them to participate . Gervais and Merchant had refused previously because they believed that the American show should be written by Americans , and only changed their minds after watching the second season .

Gervais first worried that he was too unfamiliar with office protocol in the United States , noting that he " knew everything about this place (in England) , the pitfalls , the dos and don 'ts . Whereas in America , I don 't know if I 'm getting it right or not . " Despite this , his script writing went " remarkably fast . I suppose that 's because we 'd been away from those characters for two or three years . It 's one of our favorite shows , the American Office . " Gervais and Merchant spent several

days debating phrasing and language , leading them to a point where they felt they had " translated it pretty well " for American viewers .

" The Convict " was the first Office episode to be directed by Jeffrey Blitz , who later won an Emmy Award for the fifth season episode " Stress Relief " . In a departure from series routine , Gervais and Merchant were not present on set for much of filming , though episode writers had typically been available in the past . Actress Kate Flannery found the episode " a lot of fun to shoot , " and observed that on the occasions Gervais was present , " it seems to me like he is looking at all of us with a sense of , ' I can 't believe that this exists because of me . ' That is just my interpretation , but he seems so humble , and kind of reverent . " One scene was meant to take place outdoors under cold temperatures , so the parking lot set was laden with fake snow and slush . Also present on set were two sets of twin babies , as the character of Hannah Smotridge @-@ Barr brings her son to the office .

The third season DVD contains several scenes that were deleted from the final cut of the episode . These include Dwight and Andy verbally sparring in the kitchen , Dwight informing Michael that he believes Martin has murdered Meredith , Michael explaining that he created " Prison Mike " in an improvisation class , and Pam giving Andy wildly incorrect tips for hanging out with Jim .

= = Reception = =

" The Convict " was first broadcast on NBC in the United States on November 30 , 2006 , near the end of the fall sweeps period . According to Nielsen Media Research , it was watched by an estimated 9 @. @ 07 million viewers , the highest number of the series ' season up to that point . The episode earned a 4 @. @ 4 / 11 ratings share among adults aged 18 to 49 , meaning that it was seen by 4 @. @ 4 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 11 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of broadcast . Among that demographic , The Office finished in eighteenth place for the week among all of the major networks .

Eric Goldman of IGN rated " The Convict " 9 out of 10 , an indication of an " amazing " episode . He wrote that " while this wouldn 't qualify as one of the very best episodes of the series , the great news is , Gervais and Merchant did an excellent job , working very well within the same @-@ but @-@ different world the US version of the show has created , and delivering some of the biggest and best laughs of the season . " Mark A. Perigard of the Boston Herald however was more critical of the episode , explaining that " Carell is a fearless actor , but he can 't stop a train wreck . The B @-@ story is better , as Jim decides to prank Pam by coaching Andy on just the wrong way to woo the receptionist . The Office has been erratic all season , but even at its worst , it 's still the best comedy on television . "

Writing for AOL TV , Michael Sciannamea thought " The Convict " seemed different from previous episodes , citing as evidence the scene of Michael and Martin discussing trustworthy black men ; Sciannamea attributed this to its guest writers : " I don 't think Gervais and Merchant went over the top ... it just seemed a little different than the others . " Also in his review , Sciannamea expressed his gradual enjoyment of Andy , " When I first saw him up in Stamford , I thought he was just the Connecticut version of Dwight . But now I think he adds greatly to the mix and is definitely one who is going to stir things up in Scranton . " Give Me My Remote 's Kath Skerry believed " the uncomfortable , unbearably awkward moments that the UK version perfected are definitely present throughout the episode . " She also praised Helms for " prov [ing] once again how perfectly he fits in on this show as he is absolutely hysterical . "

Entertainment Weekly columnist Abby West was pleased with the Jim @-@ Karen storyline and called it " a nice , normal progression for two single people who are into each other . " She also praised Jim 's prank on Pam , especially viewing Helms ' performance " amazingly funny as this oblivious blowhard . " Referring to " Michael 's earnest determination not to assume that Martin was the ex @-@ con whom the Stamford office had hired , " West found the episode to be a satire of " white liberal guilt " . Reviewers were also positive towards the " Prison Mike " sequence , with West calling it " a dead @-@ on impersonation of a badass convict . " Television Without Pity gave the episode an " A- " .

