

= Ben Franklin (The Office) =

" Ben Franklin " is the fifteenth episode of the third season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's forty @-@ third episode overall . Written by Mindy Kaling , who also acts in the show as Kelly Kapoor , and directed by Randall Einhorn , the episode first aired in the United States on February 1 , 2007 on NBC . " Ben Franklin " received 5 @.@ 0 / 13 in the ages 18 ? 49 demographic of the Nielsen ratings , and was watched by an estimated audience of 10 @.@ 1 million viewers , and the episode received mixed reviews among critics .

In the episode , the employees from the office prepare for Phyllis 's wedding . Michael , acting under advice from Todd , instructs Dwight to hire a stripper for the men and delegates Jim to hire one for the women . While Dwight hires a stripper , Jim ends up hiring a Ben Franklin impersonator instead .

= = Plot = =

The office plays host to a bridal shower for Phyllis Lapin (Phyllis Smith) while Bob Vance 's (Robert R. Shafer) bachelor party is held in the warehouse . Todd Packer (David Koechner) convinces Michael Scott (Steve Carell) that it is okay to hire a stripper for the bachelor party if he also gets a male stripper for the bridal shower . Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) is tired at work because he has been having many " late @-@ night talks " with Karen Filippelli (Rashida Jones) after she learned that he still has feelings for Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) .

Michael delegates the work of finding the two strippers to Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) and Jim . Dwight asks Jim if he prefers either a redhead or a brunette , and Jim responds " blonde " while Pam and Karen (redhead and brunette respectively) look over Jim and then at each other for a quick second . While Dwight locates a stripper named Elizabeth (Jackie Debatin) for Bob Vance 's party , Jim orders an educational Benjamin Franklin impersonator (Andrew Daly) as a joke . Pam and Karen have fun gently heckling the impersonator . During a talking head interview Dwight reveals that Jim has told him that the impersonator is the real Ben Franklin . Dwight says he 's " 99 % sure " the impersonator is not the real Ben Franklin but ask questions to the impersonator that he believes only the real Ben Franklin would know . However , because the impersonator is an historian and studied the life of Ben Franklin , he answers each question correctly without hesitation , much to Dwight 's anger and disbelief . In the break room , Pam and Karen share an awkward conversation about Jim and Pam 's kiss .

At the bachelor party , Bob Vance refuses a lap dance , so Michael volunteers . Before the stripper is able to perform the lap dance , Michael brings the show to an abrupt close , unwilling to do what he considers cheating on Jan Levenson (Melora Hardin) . Pam and Jim have an understated confrontation in the break room , which ends with Pam asking Ryan Howard (B. J. Novak) to set her up with some of his friends from business school in front of a visibly shocked and seemingly upset Jim .

= = Production = =

" Ben Franklin " was the second episode of the series directed by Randall Einhorn . Einhorn had previously directed " Initiation " , as well as the summer spin @-@ off webisodes " The Accountants " . " Ben Franklin " was written by Mindy Kaling , who acts on the show as customer service representative Kelly Kapoor . The episode was the sixth of the series written by Kaling .

Jackie Debatin , who appeared in " Ben Franklin " as Elizabeth , is used to playing strippers and hookers . Debatin had previously been a stripper on Friends , a stripper on That ' 70s Show , a stripper on Two and a Half Men , a madam on Veronica Mars , and a call girl on Boston Legal . In an interview , Debatin said playing Elizabeth was " probably the best experience I have had in TV work " , because the cast and crew were " down to earth , fun , grateful to be there " . Although actor Andrew Daly , who played Gordon the Ben Franklin impersonator , had already known John Krasinski , Angela Kinsey , B. J. Novak and Kate Flannery , he said that The Office cast and crew "

could not have been more welcoming to me . " Daly especially liked it when the actors " depart [ed] from the script and improvised a little . "

= = Reception = =

" Ben Franklin " received 5 @. @ 0 / 13 in the ages 18 ? 49 demographic of the Nielsen ratings . This means that five percent of all households with an 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ old living in it watched the episode , and 13 percent had their television tuned to the channel at any point . The episode was watched by an estimated audience of 10 @. @ 1 million viewers . " Ben Franklin " is one of only a handful of other episodes of The Office to reach over 10 million viewers , the others being the show 's pilot episode , " The Injury , " " Traveling Salesmen , " " The Return , " and " Stress Relief , " of which the latter reached over 20 million viewers .

" Ben Franklin " received mixed , but mostly good , reviews from critics . IGN 's Brian Zoromski wrote that " The Office was in truly excellent form this week . " Zoromski went on to credit the " great progression " in the Jim @-@ Pam @-@ Karen love triangle and Michael being " his completely inept self " as parts of the episode that made it " one of the best Office episodes this season " . Michael Sciannamea of TV Squad was less enthusiastic about the episode , writing that although it was " solid " , " not much happened here other than the Jim @-@ Karen @-@ Pam triangle . " Abby West , of Entertainment Weekly , praised the love triangle , saying " The Pam / Karen confrontation was as uncomfortable as I could possibly hope for . It 's so gratifying to see Pam 's armor cracking . " West also praised the work of the supporting cast .