

= Free Family Portrait Studio =

" Free Family Portrait Studio " is the twenty @-@ fourth episode and season finale of the eighth season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's 176th episode overall . The episode originally aired on NBC on May 10 , 2012 . " Free Family Portrait Studio " was written and directed by B. J. Novak , who also wrote and directed the season premiere " The List " . The episode guest stars Andy Buckley , Jack Coleman , Sendhil Ramamurthy , Jerry Minor , and Michael Schur .

The series ? presented as if it were a real documentary ? depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania , branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In the episode , David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) helps Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) go undercover and stage a coup , and a new opportunity arises for Robert California ( James Spader ) .

" Free Family Portrait Studio " received mixed reviews from critics , with many noting that the episode did not feel like a proper season finale . It was viewed by 4 @.@ 49 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 3 rating / 6 % share among adults between the age of 18 and 49 . The episode ranked third in its timeslot and was also the highest @-@ rated NBC series of the night .

= = Plot = =

Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) offers free family portraits in the office , and many members of the office take advantage of the opportunity , including Creed Bratton ( himself ) with his very elderly parents , Toby Flenderson ( Paul Lieberstein ) with his teenaged daughter Sasha , Meredith Palmer ( Kate Flannery ) with her teenaged son , Kelly Kapoor ( Mindy Kaling ) with Ravi ( Sendhil Ramamurthy ) , a desperate Ryan Howard ( B. J. Novak ) trying to win back Kelly 's affection yet again , and Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) with a reluctant Jim ( John Krasinski ) and their children Cecelia and Philip . Senator Robert Lipton ( Jack Coleman ) later comes by with his and Angela Martin 's ( Angela Kinsey ) son Philip to also get a family portrait . Jim suspects that Dwight 's motive for giving away family portraits was to get revenge on Jim for a prank involving a fake Velcro suit , but Dwight 's real motive was to try to get some of Philip Lipton 's DNA to run a test to determine who Philip 's actual father is . Angela is very much against this idea and tries to ensure that Dwight does not get the opportunity . After taking the pictures , Robert notices that Philip 's diaper is full , so he goes to change him . After doing so Dwight goes into the bathroom to retrieve the diaper , but Angela chases after him as he makes a break for the hospital to run the DNA test . Dwight and Angela then take part in a high @-@ speed car chase until Dwight calls his cousin Mose ( Michael Schur ) to take her off his trail with a duplicate Trans Am . Angela later finds him in the waiting area , where he confirms he 's going to be there for the entire 72 @-@ hour waiting period for the DNA results . After she sits down , holding his hand , Dwight begins kissing her and Angela briefly demurs before passionately kissing him in return .

Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) comes into the office , wearing shabby clothing , and walks straight into manager Nellie Bertram 's ( Catherine Tate ) office and pleads for a job . She eventually caves and makes him janitor for the day . Later , Andy says in a talking head interview that he has actually convinced former CFO David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) to buy Dunder Mifflin from Sabre and then make him the regional manager yet again ; Andy is wearing the shabby clothing and making himself smell of alcohol in order to make everyone believe that he is doing poorly . Andy becomes very dependent on David arriving at the office until Andy calls him to say that he cannot make it until the next Friday . Andy then announces the plan and upon hearing this everyone assumes that Andy 's conversations with David are hallucinations because none of them have seen Andy talking with David . However , David surprisingly shows up to the office and assures everyone that he is indeed buying Dunder Mifflin from Sabre with the \$ 20 million that he got from selling a toy @-@ vacuum invention to the United States Military . Upon hearing this news , Sabre CEO Robert California ( James Spader ) approaches David in an oddly excitable tone , introducing himself as " Bob Kazamakias " and takes him to the conference room to negotiate . Meanwhile , when Andy is reinstated as manager , Nellie begs him by reciting Shakespeare 's quality of mercy quote from The

Merchant of Venice . Out of pity , Andy gives Nellie a new job as special projects manager . Robert later tells the office that he will be leaving for the next three years and going to " help " undereducated Eastern European high school gymnasts with matching funds of one million dollars , which he convinces David to donate , disgusting the rest of the office . He then exits the office once and for all by giving Andy a kiss , possibly as a symbol of his power being regained , puts his arm around Andy and says to the office , " It 's been a great year . "

Meanwhile , former warehouse workers and lottery winners Calvin ( Calvin Tenner ) and Hide ( Hidetoshi Imura ) approach Darryl Philbin ( Craig Robinson ) asking for their jobs back as they made a bad investment in an energy drink for Asian homosexuals . Darryl accepts them back and shows them around the warehouse and introduces them to new foreman Val ( Ameenah Kaplan ) . Val 's boyfriend , Brandon ( Jerry Minor ) , is also there with her and notices the blatant compliments that Darryl gives to Val . Brandon then tells Darryl off which he responds to by just simply walking away . Later , Darryl and his daughter , Jada , are taking pictures at the family portrait studio ; Val joins them and holds Darryl 's hand .

At the end of the episode , Robert Lipton walks out of the building with Philip and he notices Oscar Martinez ( Oscar Nunez ) . Robert asks why Oscar did not call after the fundraiser and heavily hints at his attraction to Oscar , which Oscar has repeatedly suggested to be the case . Oscar appears taken aback , but flattered and tempted .

= = Production = =

" Free Family Portrait Studio " was written and directed by executive producer B. J. Novak , who also portrays Ryan Howard in the series , marking the last of his 15 writing and five directing credits for the series as Novak ended his day @-@ to @-@ day involvement with the series before Season 9 to work on " The Mindy Project " . The episode marks the eleventh appearance of Catherine Tate as Nellie Bertram and her eighth consecutive appearance . She first appeared in the seventh season finale , " Search Committee " as a guest star , but starting with " Tallahassee " she was added to the cast as a recurring character . The episode hinted at the possibility of her returning in the ninth season . She was initially the top choice to replace Steve Carell , but was unable to join the series at that time due to her commitment to the West End production of Much Ado About Nothing . The episode also featured the third consecutive appearance of the character David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) , former CFO of Dunder Mifflin , the seventh appearance of Jack Coleman as Angela 's husband , State Senator Robert Lipton , the second appearance of Sendhil Ramamurthy as Kelly 's boyfriend Ravi , having previously appeared in the episode " Angry Andy " , and the second appearance of former Saturday Night Live cast member Jerry Minor as Val 's boyfriend Brandon , having previously appeared in the episode " After Hours " . Former Office writer / producer Michael Schur appears as Dwight 's cousin Mose for the 10th time , and the first since the episode " Garden Party " earlier in the season . James Spader , who portrayed Robert California , made his final appearance for the eighth season .

The Season Eight DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Robert complimenting Jim and Pam 's marriage and admitting his desire to share in their love , which the two take as a metaphorical compliment , Jim receiving a text from Robert asking him if Pam and he are free at 10 the following Friday which causes the two to think that California literally wants to be a part of their relationship , Pam trying to reassure Jim that Robert 's odd behavior is a figment of their imagination , and Robert calling off the get @-@ together due to this resignation as CEO of Sabre . Jim , out of curiosity , asks him what he was planning , to which he replies " a three @-@ way " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Free Family Portrait Studio " originally aired on NBC in the United States on May 10 , 2012 . The episode was viewed by 4 @. @ 49 million viewers and received a 2 @. @ 3 rating / 6 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @. @ 3 % of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds , and 7 % of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . The episode stayed even in the ratings from the previous episode , " Turf War " . The episode finished third in its time slot , being beaten by Grey 's Anatomy which received a 3 @. @ 5 rating / 10 % share and the CBS drama Person of Interest which received a 2 @. @ 6 rating / 7 % share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . The episode beat the Fox series Touch and The CW drama series The Secret Circle . Despite this , " Free Family Portrait Studio " was the highest @- @ rated NBC television episode of the night . 2 @. @ 20 million viewers saw the episode through DVR , bringing the viewing total to 6 @. @ 69 million viewers .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Free Family Portrait Studio " received mixed reviews from critics . Myles McNutt from The A.V. Club wrote that " Free Family Portrait Studio " proved to be " a disheartening conclusion to the show 's worst season , offering little optimism to sustain our already dwindling enthusiasm over the summer months . " He continued to say that the season made him have little interest in " seeing anything further from Andy Bernard " . Despite this , he complimented the Dwight subplot due to its slight connection to real human emotions . He ultimately gave the episode a C + . HitFix reviewer Alan Sepinwall wrote that he hoped the new showrunner , following Paul Lieberstein , would undo the developments made in the finale , criticizing the season 's run of Andy Bernard as manager and Nellie Bertram 's character . He also wrote that he would only view the first handful of episodes , due to the new showrunner and the hope that the season would improve . Cindy White of IGN wrote that the episode " hit all the marks " as a season finale , and said she was happy that Sabre was finally gone from the series . She complimented the good writing and character moments , but criticized the possible return of Nellie and the handling of the Angela @- @ Dwight storyline over the season . She ultimately gave the episode an 8 @. @ 0 / 10 , calling it " great " . Additionally , multiple critics criticized Andy 's over @- @ dramatization while trying to make a comeback to Dunder Mifflin .