

= Lice (The Office) =

" Lice " is the tenth episode of the ninth season of the American comedy television series The Office . The episode was written by Niki Schwartz @-@ Wright and directed by Rodman Flender . It originally aired on NBC on January 10 , 2013 . The episode guest stars Julius " Dr. J " Erving as himself .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Pam Halpert (Jenna Fischer) accidentally brings lice into the office but lets Meredith Palmer (Kate Flannery) take the fall while Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) vows to destroy the parasites . Meanwhile , Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) spends a great day in Philadelphia with a potential business associate (Erving) ; Nellie Bertram (Catherine Tate) , Phyllis Vance (Phyllis Smith) , and Kevin Malone (Brian Baumgartner) interfere with Darryl Philbin 's (Craig Robinson) love life .

" Lice " received mixed reviews from television critics ; many reviewers enjoyed the emphasis the episode placed on Flannery 's character , although others felt the story did not work . The episode was also viewed by 4 @.@ 54 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 2 / 6 percent rating among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 , ranking third in its timeslot . The episode ultimately ranked as the highest @-@ rated NBC series of the night .

= = Plot = =

Pam Halpert (Jenna Fischer) finds managing her household without her husband Jim (John Krasinski) to be more difficult than anticipated , as she struggles with duties such as taking out the trash . Her already frazzled condition worsens when she finds lice on her daughter Cece , leaving her no choice but to wash all the clothing in the house . At work the next day , she notices Meredith Palmer (Kate Flannery) frantically scratching her head , and realizes she may have transferred the lice from Cece to the office . She initiates an investigation and Erin Hannon (Ellie Kemper) finds that all of the employees except Darryl Philbin (Craig Robinson) , Nellie Bertram (Catherine Tate) , Phyllis Vance (Phyllis Smith) , and Kevin Malone (Brian Baumgartner) have lice . Given her disregard for cleanliness , the employees assume Meredith is responsible ; Pam defends her but neglects to admit her guilt . To eliminate the lice , Meredith shaves her head . Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) also overreacts , donning a hazmat suit and accidentally exposing himself to a hallucinogenic bug bomb that causes him to faint . On Erin 's advice , the other infected employees pair up to put mayonnaise on each other 's hair to suffocate the lice , which allows Pete (Jake Lacy) and Erin to spend time together and Angela Martin to prank Oscar Martinez in retaliation for his affair with her husband . Pam 's mother calls to inform her that Cece still has lice ; the other staff overhear and realize Pam is responsible for the lice infestation , much to Meredith 's delight .

Meanwhile , Jim goes to Philadelphia to meet with a potential investor in his sports marketing company ; the investor is none other than Julius " Dr. J " Erving , a personal hero of Jim 's . Being sensitive to how difficult it must be to manage the house and kids by herself , Jim doesn 't tell her who the investor is during their phone conversations and pretends to be stressed over the meeting ; Pam , in turn , affects to be having no problems so that she won 't add to Jim 's supposed stress . Back at the office , Pam apologizes to Meredith , and the two go out for a beer . While at the bar , Pam tells Meredith ? who is a single parent ? she now realizes how hard it is to handle children without a husband .

The uninfected workers are sent down to the warehouse to avoid contracting lice . Darryl had recently manipulated the warehouse foreman Val (Ameenah Kaplan) into breaking up with him because he wanted to have a new start when he moves to Philadelphia for his job at Jim 's new sports marketing company . Darryl tells the others about this so that they will be careful what they say to Val . Nellie , Phyllis , and Kevin confront Val and try to convince her to take Darryl back , to no avail . However , when Kevin then tries to get a date with Val , she is so mortified at her apparent dating prospects that she decides to get back together with Darryl , much to his annoyance .

= = Production = =

" Lice " was written by story editor Niki Schwartz @-@ Wright , marking her debut writing credit for the series . It was directed by Rodman Flender . This marked his second directorial effort for the series , after the earlier ninth season entry " The Whale " . As mentioned before , the episode guest starred Erving as himself . In addition , " Lice " featured performances by Ameenah Kaplan , who reprised her role as Val ; and Linda Purl as Pam 's mother , whose voice was heard on the phone . Kate Flannery did not actually shave her head for the episode . According to her Twitter account , make @-@ up artist Ed French was responsible for the bald cap and Kim M. Ferry designed the shaved hair effect . According to the actress , the prosthetics took three hours to apply . Afterwards , she joked that she has " newfound respect for the actors in Planet of the Apes ! " This is the third episode to not feature Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) or Clark (Clark Duke) . Helms left the show temporarily in the season 's sixth episode " The Boat " in order to film The Hangover Part III , whereas Duke left for a few episodes to film Kick @-@ Ass 2 .

The scenes at the end of the episode take place at The Bog ; this is an actual bar in Scranton . In addition , the exterior shots were all actually filmed in Scranton . In order to secure permission , the series ' production staff phoned the bar 's co @-@ owner , Brian Craig , and requested that the bar be featured on the show . Reportedly , parts of the scenes were filmed with an iPhone .

= = Cultural references = =

Jim compares spending a day with Julius Erving to a hypothetical situation wherein Pam would spend the day with John Stamos . Pam and Meredith bond over karaoke , and the two sing the song " Girls Just Want to Have Fun " , which was made famous by Cyndi Lauper in 1983 .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Lice " originally aired on NBC on January 10 , 2013 . In its original American broadcast , the episode was viewed by 4 @.@ 54 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 2 rating / 6 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @.@ 2 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 6 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . The Office ranked third in its timeslot , being beaten by an episode of the CBS series Person of Interest which received a 2 @.@ 9 / 8 percent rating , and an entry of the ABC series Grey 's Anatomy which received a 3 @.@ 2 / 8 percent rating . In addition , The Office was the highest @-@ rated NBC television program on the night it aired . The episode was the twenty @-@ fourth most @-@ watched episode of television for the week it aired in the 18 ? 49 demographic , with 2 @.@ 772 million viewers in the age group .

= = = Reviews = = =

USA Today writer Whitney Matheson called the episode " the funniest ep this season " and that " it also ranks as one of the best since Steve Carell 's departure in 2011 " . She lauded Flannery 's performance , writing that " the actress has never made me laugh harder than on last night 's episode " . Mark Trammell of TV Equals called the episode " excellent " ; he was particularly pleased with the episode 's humor . Michael Tedder of Vulture awarded the episode four out of five stars and said that it allowed Meredith , who until the episode had been " a mostly one @-@ dimensional source of promiscuity jokes " to have " two dimensions for once " . He also applauded Fischer 's performance , writing that it " would make for a terrific Emmy submission episode " .

Farihah Zaman of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B " and criticized its excessive narrative threads . She felt that Pam and Jim 's separation brought " out the worst in them " , but that " the

same situations that force Jim and Pam to confront their flaws reveal the overlooked strengths of a couple of less prominent characters ". She also wrote that the ending was " touching " because it humanized Meredith and made her out as a " badass ". Cindy White of IGN awarded the episode a score of 7 @. @ 8 out of 10 , denoting a " good " episode . She felt that the final scenes with Pam and Meredith singing were " a nice callback to the show 's glory days " and made the ending feel " layered and grounded ". White also applauded the short sequence that showed many of the office staff mundanely going about their day with mayonnaise on their heads , noting that the pacing was reminiscent of the first season when the episodes " had room to breathe ". White , however , did feel that Jim 's storyline was too reminiscent of the story arc in the fifth season when Pam went to art school .

Nick Campbell of TV.com wrote an extremely negative review of the episode and called it " terrible " . He felt that Pam 's behavior due to Jim being gone was uncalled for . Furthermore , he felt that Dwight " swung too far into the territory that is known as ' annoying caricature ' ". Campbell did , however , write highly of Ellie Kemper , saying that " she 's played [her character] funnily and warmly as anyone else ". Several reviewers argued that the episode functioned as a filler episode . Brett Davinger of The California Literary Review called it the " epitome of filler " . ScreenCrush reviewer Damon Houx wrote that " if everyone were in the same location this would be a bottle episode " . Furthermore , Darryl 's subplot was mostly criticized . Tedder wrote that while " it 's fine to have a story line where someone pursues something and then realizes it wasn 't what it was cracked up to be " he wished that the show had actually developed Val as a character . White wrote that she did not enjoy seeing " this manipulative version of Darryl " because it contrasted with his earlier characterization in episodes like " The Deposition " . Zaman called the subplot " surprising " .