

= Back from Vacation =

" Back from Vacation " is the twelfth episode of the third season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's 40th episode overall . It first aired on January 4 , 2007 , on NBC , and was the first episode to air after the December holiday hiatus . " Back from Vacation " was the first script written by Justin Spitzer for the series . Julian Farino served as the episode director .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania , branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Michael Scott (Steve Carell) returns from his vacation in Jamaica and has a luau in the warehouse to celebrate . It is revealed that he went to Jamaica with Jan Levinson (Melora Hardin) when a racy photograph of him and Jan is circulated . Meanwhile , Karen Filippelli (Rashida Jones) and Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) have an argument over Karen 's living situation , leading to Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) offering him advice .

According to Nielsen Media Research , the episode was watched by an estimated 8 @. @ 80 million viewers . Among the 18 ? 49 demographic , it earned a 4 @. @ 3 / 11 ratings share and helped NBC finish in first place for the night . " Back from Vacation " received generally positive reviews from critics , with Carell 's performance receiving positive attention in particular .

= = Synopsis = =

Michael Scott (Steve Carell) returns from his Jamaican vacation rejuvenated , and directs the Party Planning Committee to throw a luau @-@ themed party in the warehouse to accompany the annual inventory . When Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) notices Jan Levinson (Melora Hardin) in the margins of a photo from Michael 's vacation , he admits to the documentary crew that he and Jan went to Jamaica together .

Michael attempts to send another vacation photograph to Todd Packer (David Koechner) as proof of the trip , but mistakenly chooses " Packaging " instead of " Packer " from the address menu , sending the photograph to the entire shipping warehouse , including Darryl Philbin (Craig Robinson) , the warehouse supervisor . The photo is quickly forwarded throughout the office and beyond . Michael enlists Dwight Schrute 's (Rainn Wilson) assistance in preventing its spread , but these efforts are largely ineffective .

Karen Filippelli (Rashida Jones) has been upset with Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) because he expressed objections to the prospect of Karen moving into an apartment two blocks from his own . Pam convinces Jim that he is being unreasonable , and Jim accepts her advice and apologizes to Karen . Pam tells the documentary crew that she was glad to help Jim , but Dwight walks in on her crying in private . He awkwardly attempts to console her , although he misunderstands : " So , you 're PMSing pretty bad , huh ? "

During the luau / inventory , Jan arrives at the office to speak with Michael in private . Michael is terrified that Jan is there to confront him over the widely spread photo , but she appears to be unaware of it , instead confessing her attraction to him against all reason .

= = Production = =

" Back from Vacation " was written by Justin Spitzer , a staff writer who joined The Office in its third season . The episode was his first script for the series . Spitzer found Jan 's final scene with Michael ? in which he expects she will yell at him for their circulated picture but instead informs him they are staying together ? especially tricky to write . Spitzer was unsure how to craft the scene , and eventually requested advice from the other series ' writers . They decided that Jan would give a " psychobabble " response to Michael . Sitting on a panel of television writers at Northwestern University , Spitzer briefly described her reasoning , " Jan ? s nuts . She has some bad psychiatrist giving her bad advice . " He praised the benefits of a " good writers room , " in which " scenes go to this place you never could have gone to alone . "

" Back from Vacation " was directed by Julian Farino , who later was responsible for directing " The

Deposition " , a fourth season episode that featured some of the ramifications of Michael 's circulated picture . Recurring actors Creed Bratton , Ed Helms , Rashida Jones , Craig Robinson , and David Koechner appeared as guest stars in " Back from Vacation " .

The season three DVD contains a number of deleted scenes , such as Michael arriving from Jamaica at the airport , wearing warm @-@ weather clothes , Dwight , Meredith , Angela and Kevin separately reacting to the news that Michael took Jan to Jamaica , and Jan maintaining the ruse that she was in Scottsdale while talking to a coworker at Corporate , who is viewing the photo on his computer . Additional scenes include Dwight complaining about Jim 's pranks while Michael was on vacation , Roy helping Ryan with inventory , Andy challenging Dwight to a box @-@ stacking race , and Meredith climbing on a shelf , which falls and traps her .

= = Reception = =

" Back from Vacation " first aired on January 4 , 2007 in the United States on NBC . It was the first episode of the season to air after the end of the December holiday break . According to Nielsen Media Research , an estimated 8 @. @ 80 million viewers watched the episode . It earned a 4 @. @ 3 / 11 ratings share among adults aged 18 to 49 , meaning that it was seen by 4 @. @ 3 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 . The Office and its lead @-@ in show , My Name Is Earl , helped NBC finish in first place for the night in that demographic .

The episode attracted generally positive reviews from critics . Brian Zoromski of IGN rated " Back from Vacation " 9 @. @ 7 / 10 , an indication of an " amazing " episode . Stated highlights included the opening sequence , Carell 's performance , and Pam 's storyline with Jim and Karen . Zoromski concluded in his review that " with so much attention to detail , realistic character reactions , and very few completely over @-@ the @-@ top comedy moments , ' Back from Vacation ' is one of the best Office episodes yet this season . We 're very glad they 're back . " AOL TV 's Michael Sciannamea expressed surprise that Jan accompanied Michael on his vacation and immediately wanted to discover more about their relationship . He was also intrigued with Dwight 's attempt to cheer up Pam , until the PMS joke when he thought it " would have been very interesting if Dwight had been a real comfort to her and offered his friendship . " Sciannamea concluded that " this was just a terrific episode . Well written , well acted , and had you begging for more at the end . What more can you ask for ? "

Writing for Entertainment Weekly , Abby West focused on Carell 's acting , explaining that " the way that Michael 's desire to boast and his healthy fear of offending Jan played out on Steve Carell 's face was fantastic . From his braggadocio on the phone with Todd Packer (Packer !) to his death march up the stairs to face Jan , it was a thing of beauty . " BuddyTV 's Oscar Dahl believed that " Back from Vacation " was " one of the two or three best of the season " , opining that " simplicity " was the key to the series ' success . Dahl continued , " Each episode 's premise can be entirely mundane and inconsequential . It will still mine laughs from the situation at hand . We also had some nice development in the Jim @-@ Pam @-@ Karen triangle , with Pam giving Jim relationship advice , then bawling her eyes out afterwards . Maybe the best scene in the episode saw Dwight comfort her . " Television Without Pity graded the episode with an A.