

= The Office ( U.S. season 8 ) =

The eighth season of the American television comedy *The Office* commenced airing on NBC in the United States on September 22 , 2011 , and concluded on May 10 , 2012 , consisting of 24 episodes . The series is an American adaptation of the British comedy series of the same name , and is presented in a mockumentary format , portraying the daily lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictitious Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . The eighth season of *The Office* aired on Thursdays at 9 : 00 p.m. ( Eastern ) in the United States as part of the " Comedy Night Done Right " television block . This was the first season without Steve Carell as Michael Scott in the lead role and the only one to not feature the character in any capacity .

The eighth season largely centers on Andy Bernard 's ( Ed Helms ) ascension to regional manager , as well as the antics of Robert California ( James Spader ) , the new CEO of Sabre , a fictional printer company that owns Dunder Mifflin . Halfway through the season , Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) ? along with Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) , Stanley Hudson ( Leslie David Baker ) , Ryan Howard ( B. J. Novak ) , Erin Hannon ( Ellie Kemper ) , and Cathy Simms ( Lindsey Broad ) ? travel to Florida to help set up a Sabre Store , where Nellie Bertram ( Catherine Tate ) is introduced . Eventually , former CFO of Dunder Mifflin David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) buys back the company , firing California .

Despite debuting with moderate viewing figures , the departure of Carell affected the show 's ratings , which fell as the season progressed . The season ranked as the eighty @-@ seventh most watched television series during the 2011 ? 12 television year and saw a dramatic decrease in ratings from the previous season . Critical reception was mixed ; many critics had previously said the series should have ended after the departure of Carell and thus criticized the recycled storylines . Other critics were more positive , commenting on various actors and their characters . It marked the first time since season one that the show did not receive any Emmy nominations .

= = Production = =

The eighth season of the show was produced by Reveille Productions and Deedle @-@ Dee Productions , both in association with NBC Universal Television Studios . The show is based on the British comedy series of the same name , which was created by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant for the British Broadcasting Corporation ( BBC ) . In addition , the two are executive producers on the show . This season of *The Office* was produced by Greg Daniels and Paul Lieberstein , the latter of whom serves as the showrunner . Returning writers from the previous season included Lieberstein , Charlie Grandy , Justin Spitzer , Carrie Kemper , Daniel Chun , Robert Padnick , Aaron Shure , Steve Hely , Amelie Gillette , Mindy Kaling , and B. J. Novak ; the latter two were both also credited as executive producers . It was previously unknown whether Kaling would write for the series any longer . Kaling herself confirmed via her Twitter page that she would write the Christmas @-@ themed episode , " Christmas Wishes " . Three new writers joined the staff beginning in season eight : Owen Ellickson , Allison Silverman and Dan Greaney . The season also saw the directorial debuts of cast members Ed Helms and Brian Baumgartner ; Helms directed the episode " Christmas Wishes " , and Baumgartner directed " After Hours " .

The series was renewed for an eighth season on March 17 , 2011 , began filming on July 25 , 2011 , and the season concluded filming on March 9 , 2012 . Jenna Fischer 's pregnancy was written into the show , and Pam was again pregnant at the start of the season with a boy as she was in real life . Unlike the sixth season , there was no episode focusing on the baby 's birth ; it was instead announced on a blog . In an interview , executive producer Lieberstein stated that , with the departure of Michael Scott , the writers would explore further into the other characters on the show , such as centering on a specific character for an episode . On January 25 , 2012 , news broke that NBC was planning a spin @-@ off series starring Rainn Wilson as Dwight Schrute , that would be set at Schrute Farms , Dwight 's bed @-@ and @-@ breakfast and beet farm . The spin @-@ off would be created by Wilson and executive producer Paul Lieberstein , but *Office* developer Greg Daniels would not be involved . Due to his initial involvement in the spin @-@ off , Lieberstein

stepped down as showrunner of The Office . On October 29 , 2012 , it was revealed that NBC was not going forward with the proposed spin @-@ off , although the original backdoor pilot , " The Farm " aired later in the ninth season .

= = Cast = =

The Office employs an ensemble cast . Most of the main characters , and some minor ones , are based on characters from the British version of The Office . While these characters normally have the same attitudes and perceptions as their British counterparts , the roles have been redesigned to better fit the American show . The show is known for its large cast size , many of whom are known particularly for their improvisational work . Rainn Wilson portrays Dwight Schrute , who , based upon Gareth Keenan , is the Assistant to the Regional Manager , although the character frequently fails to include " to the " in his title . John Krasinski portrays Jim Halpert , a sales representative and prankster , who is based upon Tim Canterbury , and is married to Pam Halpert , the office administrator . Pam ( Fischer ) , who is based on Dawn Tinsley , is shy , but is often a cohort with Jim in his pranks on Dwight . B. J. Novak portrays Ryan Howard , who is a temporary worker . Helms plays Andy Bernard , the preppy manager ? who was previously a salesman ? and boastful Cornell alumnus whose love for a cappella music and awkward social skills generates mixed feelings from his employees . Andy is an original character , meaning he has no English equivalent from Gervais 's series . Reprising his guest @-@ starring role of Robert California , James Spader joined the regular cast to replace Kathy Bates 's character as the CEO of Sabre ; it was announced that Spader would appear in at least fifteen episodes . Cody Horn , who guest starred in the seventh season as Jordan Garfield , with a possibility of returning as a series regular , did not return .

The eighth season also featured new characters , originally expected to include Stanley Hudson 's other daughter and a new male addition to the accounting department , however , these characters never appeared . Stephen Collins , Dee Wallace and Josh Groban were cast as Andy 's father , mother and brother , respectively , and appeared in the episode " Garden Party " . From the episodes " Pam 's Replacement " to " Last Day in Florida " , Lindsey Broad had a recurring guest star spot as Cathy Simms , Pam 's temporary replacement while she was on maternity leave , and who remained employed at the company for a while after . Maura Tierney appeared in " Mrs. California " , playing California 's wife . Catherine Tate returned to reprise her role as Nellie Bertram , in a major arc starting in the episode " Tallahassee " . Despite reports that she would also get romantically involved with Robert , this never occurred . Two writers for the animated comedy series The Simpsons , Matt Selmán and Matt Warburton , appeared in the Kaling @-@ scripted episode " Test the Store " , and Simpsons star Dan Castellaneta appeared in the episode " Turf War " .

At the time , this season marked the final year that some cast members ? notably Helms , Fischer , Novak , and Krasinski ? were signed on for the show , as their contracts expired at the end of the season ; this caused speculation that several members of the main cast would leave the series following this season . The eighth season was Novak 's last as a series regular , although he made a few recurring appearances in the ninth season . It was also Kaling 's final full season , due to her pilot , The Mindy Project , being picked up by Fox ; Kaling portrayed customer service representative Kelly Kapoor . On February 28 , 2012 , it was announced that Spader would not return for a ninth season of the show . There was initial speculation that following the eighth season , Daniels was considering rebooting the series due to the possible departures of main cast members . However , a new deal was negotiated with NBC , and all the main cast members , sans Spader , Novak , and Kaling , would return for the ninth season , although several new characters would be brought on board for a " mini reboot " . NBC also announced that Catherine Tate would become a series regular .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

The series aired on Thursdays at 9 : 00 p.m. as part of " Comedy Night Done Right " television block . The season premiere , " The List " received a 3 @. @ 9 / 10 percent share in the Nielsen ratings among viewers aged 18 to 49 , meaning that 3 @. @ 9 percent of viewers aged 18 to 49 watched the episode , and 10 percent of viewers watching television at the time watched the episode . " The List " was the highest rated episode of the season . Despite this , it became the lowest season premiere of the series since the series premiere . The rest of the season was unable to receive more than seven million viewers . The twenty @- @ second episode , " Fundraiser " received only 4 @. @ 17 million viewers , making it , at the time , the lowest @- @ rated episode of The Office to ever air , although it was later beaten by several ninth season episodes the following year . The season finale , " Free Family Portrait Studio " , was viewed by 4 @. @ 49 million viewers , making it the lowest finale for The Office to air , beating the first season finale " Hot Girl " , which was viewed by 4 @. @ 8 million viewers . The drop in ratings led to a lower ad @- @ price for the series , with an average cost of \$ 178 @, @ 840 per @- @ 30 second commercial . Despite this , the show was still one of NBC 's highest rated shows and ranked as the most expensive ad @- @ cost for any NBC scripted series during the year it aired . Despite the lower live ratings , Nielsen Soundscan announced that The Office added up to 44 percent to its next @- @ day " live plus same day " 18 ? 49 rating when additional time @- @ shifted viewing was added , such as DVRing .

The season ranked as the eighty @- @ seventh most @- @ watched television series during the 2011 ? 12 season , with an average of 6 @. @ 506 million viewers . The season also ranked as the thirty @- @ second most @- @ watched television series in the 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ old demographic . In this category , the show was viewed by an estimated 4 @. @ 376 million viewers per episode and received a 3 @. @ 42 rating / 9 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that , on average , the season was viewed by 3 @. @ 42 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds , and 9 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast .

= = = Critical response = = =

The eighth season of The Office received mixed reviews . While some critics felt that the show was still humorous in its eighth year , many others argued that the program should have ended after the departure of Steve Carell . The A.V. Club reviewer Myles McNutt criticized California 's role , noting that he was someone whom " the narrative reacts to as opposed to something actually involved in the narrative " . Alan Sepinwall of HitFix criticized Ed Helms ' comedic performance as manager calling him " a softer version of Michael Scott " . He has also criticized the toning down of Spader 's character , California , from his appearance in the show 's seventh season 's finale , " Search Committee " , as well as expressing disappointment over seeing many supporting characters transform into caricatures of their earlier season 's selves . He stopped reviewing a majority of the Season 8 episodes since " Pam 's Replacement " , due to his distaste for the series . Time writer James Poniewozik agreed with Sepinwall and said that Jim should have been named manager so the series could be more ensemble oriented . New York Magazine named Andy Bernard one of the most annoying TV characters of 2011 . Matt Zoller Seitz from New York wrote , " Fact is , the show 's first post ? Steve Carell year has been a mess , at times bordering on a disaster " , although he did write , " Nevertheless , I still adore these characters , even when the writing doesn 't do them justice . " McNutt gave the season a C grade overall , writing that the season finale , " Free Family Portrait Studio " was " a disheartening conclusion to the show 's worst season , offering little optimism to sustain our already dwindling enthusiasm over the summer months . "

Bret Fetzer of Amazon.com wrote that " it 's best to approach this season as if it were a completely new series " . He felt that it is unfair to compare the quality of the season to past seasons because " the series ' previous heights were so very high " . Ultimately , he called the year " uneven " , because episodes would range from putting " Andy into Michael Scott @- @ ish situations " to " seek [ ing ] out new angles on the well @- @ established web of interpersonal conflicts " , with the result that the episodes " sometimes " work . Matt Zoller Seitz of Salon considered the post @- @ Michael

Scott era of The Office " warmer and more reflective " . He also praised the decision of Andy as a manager , specifically Ed Helms and Craig Robinson 's performance in " Lotto " calling it the " subtlest , deepest acting to date [ for The Office ] " . He called " Lotto " the best episode of the season . Hank Stuever of The Washington Post named the series the tenth best series of 2011 specifically praising the actors ' performances in " Mrs. California " for their ability to deliver cringe humor without Carell . TV Guide named it an honorable mention on their list of the best TV shows of 2011 . Price Peterson from TV.com called the series " still one of the best shows on TV " and argued that , while " Season 8 definitely wasn 't the show 's best " , the season " sneaked in some genuinely great jokes , new characters , and affecting plotlines . " Despite the lackluster reviews many of the episodes received , many critics praised Ellie Kemper 's performance as Erin Hannon . McNutt noted that " regardless of how down I was on this or any other episode , Ellie Kemper really has been tremendous all season . " In addition , Kemper 's performance in the episodes " Spooked , " " Christmas Wishes , " " Pool Party , " and " Special Project , " in particular , were praised by critics .

Many members of the cast and crew felt that the season was not the show 's best . Rainn Wilson said that the season possessed some mistakes " creatively " , such as the chemistry between Spader and Helms , which he called " a bit dark " . He argued that the show should have gone for a " brighter and more energized " relationship . Brian Baumgartner felt that the show " stayed status quo [ with the previous year ] , but without a key piece " and " didn 't make a firm decision " on the direction the show was headed . Ben Silverman , one of the show 's producers , said that " it didn 't have the sense of purpose and focus " that the next season would have .

= = Episodes = =

In the following table , " U.S. viewers ( million ) " refers to the number of Americans who viewed the episode on the night of broadcast . Episodes are listed by the order in which they aired , and may not necessarily correspond to their production codes .

= = Home media release = =