

= Couples Discount =

" Couples Discount " is the fifteenth episode of the ninth season of the American comedy television series The Office and the 191st episode overall . It originally aired on NBC on February 7 , 2013 . The episode features return guest appearances from Andy Buckley as Dunder Mifflin CEO David Wallace and Chris Diamantopoulos as Brian the boom mic operator .

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 , the office pairs into couples so that they may all be able to take advantage of a Valentine 's Day discount at a mini @-@ mall . After Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) returns from his boat trip , Erin Hannon ( Ellie Kemper ) decides that she is going to break up with him so that she can be with Pete Miller ( Jake Lacy ) , but Pete begins to doubt her . Meanwhile , Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) and Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) share lunch with Brian .

" Couples Discount " received mixed reviews from television critics and was viewed by 4 @.@ 15 million viewers and received 2 @.@ 1 / 6 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . The episode ultimately ranked fourth in its timeslot . Despite this , The Office ranked as the highest @-@ rated NBC series of the night .

= = Plot = =

The office pairs into couples so they may all be able to take advantage of a Valentine 's Day discount at a nail salon in a local mini @-@ mall and enjoy one last boss @-@ free day before Andy ( Ed Helms ) returns from his three @-@ month boating sojourn . Erin ( Ellie Kemper ) decides that she is going to break up with Andy so she can be with Pete ( Jake Lacy ) , but he begins to doubt her because she goes to inordinate lengths to make their last day without Andy a happy one .

Andy surprises everyone by showing up a day early and proceeds to alienate the entire office through a series of stupid or tone @-@ deaf actions : he arrives at work without having washed or shaved since he left , he wrecks Dwight 's record @-@ setting sale with the Scranton White Pages for no reason other than to reassert his authority as boss , shows no shame at accepting all of his absentee paychecks and a " merit bonus " because the branch exceeded their quarterly sales goal while he was gone , and holds a meeting to get up to speed on recent events so he can bluff his way through a meeting with CEO David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) , who has no idea that Andy was gone at all . The employees decide not to tell David about Andy 's unapproved absence out of gratitude for Andy 's past kindnesses , but at the meeting they cannot resist crafting made @-@ up recent events in the hope that he will blow his own cover . However , when David meets with Andy he is almost completely oblivious to Andy 's erroneous statements , and Andy quickly catches on to what the employees are up to .

At the end of the day , Erin tries to break up with Andy , saying she no longer loves him and is angry that he left and barely communicated with her . Andy vehemently protests the breakup and says their relationship can work out if she just pretends to still love him . Erin walks outside to Pete , saying she could not do it . Pete tells her he is okay with this , since all he wants is for her to be happy . Emboldened by this , she gives him a kiss , runs back up to Andy 's office , and breaks up with him . In her brief breakup speech she repeats her complaints about his three month absence , not realizing that he is talking to David Wallace on speakerphone .

Meanwhile , Pam ( Jenna Fischer ) and Jim ( John Krasinski ) share lunch with Brian ( Chris Diamantopoulos ) to thank him for protecting her from Frank . They are expecting his wife Alyssa to join him , but Brian reveals they are getting a divorce after having been fighting for a while . In an awkward attempt to lighten the mood , Brian makes a joke referencing how he consoled Pam when she broke down after her fight with Jim over the phone a few weeks ago . After the lunch Jim admits , with some prodding , that he is angry that Pam didn 't tell him about this incident . Pam explains that she hadn 't wanted to add to his worries , which only makes Jim angrier , but he brushes the matter off to avoid an argument . The couple had planned on sharing an evening bottle of wine for Valentine 's Day , but Jim later tells Pam he wants to go down to Philadelphia instead because he

fears they would only end up fighting . Pam initially accepts this , but realizing that the silence between them is worse than fighting , she tells Jim he should stay and fight with her , and Jim agrees .

= = Production = =

" Couples Discount " was written by co @-@ executive producer Allison Silverman , marking her second writing credit for the season after " Roy 's Wedding " . It was directed by Troy Miller , his third directorial credit for the series . Originally , it was reported that the episode would be titled " Andy 's Return " . However , it was later renamed to " Couples Discount " . The episode features the return of series regular of Ed Helms , who had left for several episodes to film The Hangover Part III . His character was written out for eight episodes , leaving the office on a boat for three months with his brother Walter .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Couples Discount " originally aired on NBC on February 7 , 2013 . In its original American broadcast , the episode was viewed by an estimated 4 @.@ 15 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 1 rating / 6 % share . This means that it was seen by 2 @.@ 1 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 . This marked a slight increase in the ratings from the previous episode , " Vandalism " . The Office ranked fourth in its timeslot , being beaten by an episode of the ABC series Grey 's Anatomy and the CBS police procedural Person of Interest , both of which received a 3 @.@ 1 / 8 percent rating , and an installment of the Fox series Glee that received a 2 @.@ 2 / 6 percent rating .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Couples Discount " received mixed reviews . The A.V. Club reviewer Erik Adams complimented the transformation of Andy into a villain , calling it " intriguing " and " curious " , although he said the characterization wouldn 't " stick " to the character for the following episodes . Adams gave more praise to the subplots , particularly Jim and Pam 's storyline , calling it a " refreshingly honest take on the vagaries of marriage " and compared their decision to fight at home to the early " Pam @-@ and @-@ Jim charm " . Adams gave the episode a B- . TV.com columnist Nick Campbell complimented the choice of using Andy as a villain , for further developing the Erin @-@ Pete relationship , which he called " one of two satisfying events in this episode " . He also praised the Jim and Pam storyline and the writers for focusing on their relationship , rather than Brian , writing that their final scene was " almost sweet , how nervous they were about heading into the Thunderdome " . He criticized the plot inconsistency and the nail salon plot for feeling " jammed in " and for using predictable jokes . Campbell ultimately called it a " satisfying episode " .

IGN 's Roth Cornet was more critical towards Andy 's return , writing that it serves as further example of the writers treating him as a plot device , rather than a character . Cornet continued that the episode featured " some fairly compelling drama , as well as some of the more cohesive moments of the season , character @-@ wise " , but " very little comedy " . Cornet complimented the turn in the Jim @-@ Pam @-@ Brian storyline , and for the writers using Brian as a catalyst for a " real conversation between Pam and Jim " , instead of a love triangle between the three . She also went on to praise their final scene , for showcasing " what The Office has created with these two characters ? a human , and real relationship . " Cornet gave the episode a 6 @.@ 9 , considering it an " okay " episode .