

= Practice Date =

" Practice Date " is the fourth episode of the second season of Parks and Recreation , and the tenth overall episode of the series . It originally aired on NBC in the United States on October 8 , 2009 . In the episode , Ann takes Leslie to dinner to help prepare for her first date , while the rest of the parks department tries to learn secrets about each other as part of a game .

The episode was written by Harris Wittels and directed by Alex Hardcastle . It featured stand @-@ up comedian Louis C.K. in his third guest appearance as Dave Sanderson , a Pawnee police officer who develops a romantic interest in Leslie . The episode also featured a fictional sex scandal mirroring the real @-@ life 2009 scandal of South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford .

" Practice Date " was the first episode to establish the personality of Jerry as the co @-@ worker everyone else in the office picks on , and marked the first of several appearances by Jay Jackson as news reporter Perd Hapley . According to Nielsen Media Research , the episode was seen by 4 @.@ 97 million household viewers , an improvement over the previous week 's episode , " Beauty Pageant " . " Practice Date " received generally positive reviews , with several commentators praising it for fleshing out the characters of Ron and Tom .

= = Plot = =

The episode opens with Leslie (Amy Poehler) and the rest of the Parks department watching media coverage of Pawnee Councilman Bill DEXHART (Kevin Symons) , a married man , admitting to having four @-@ way sex in a Brazilian cave while pretending to be " building houses for the underprivileged " . He tries to justify it by saying that it was his birthday on the day of the foursome , and that he " ... really wanted to do it . " Tom (Aziz Ansari) insists nobody could find any scandalous information about him , prompting the parks department employees to start a game to see who can get the most dirt on each other . Meanwhile , Leslie tells Ann (Rashida Jones) she is nervous about her first date with Pawnee police officer Dave Sanderson (Louis C.K.) . Ann offers to take Leslie on a practice date to help Leslie prepare for the real date . During the practice date , Ann realizes that Leslie has a serious problem : Leslie brought note cards with " topics of conversation " and engages in fake @-@ sounding " practice laughing . "

Ann decides to use exposure therapy on Leslie to help her deal with the worst @-@ case date scenario . She acts very mean to Leslie , who is initially horrified , but she eventually stands up to Ann . When Ann tells her she is now ready for anything , Leslie feels cheered up and very confident . They go to a bar later to celebrate , where Leslie gets very drunk . After leaving Ann , she visits Dave 's house to tell him that she was nervous about their upcoming date , but now realizes he is lucky to have her because of how " awesome " she is . A seemingly annoyed Dave brings Leslie home . The next day , Leslie feels horrible for ruining her chances with Dave . He arrives at her office later and she starts to apologize , but he says she can make it up to them on their second date , thereby reassuring her the first date is already over . Leslie once again feels cheered up .

Meanwhile , during the office game , Mark (Paul Schneider) announces Jerry 's (Jim O 'Heir) adoptive mother was arrested for marijuana possession . A distraught Jerry said he did not know he was adopted , making Mark feel terribly guilty . Later , Ron (Nick Offerman) declares himself the winner when he tells Tom he knows Tom 's marriage to Wendy (Jama Williamson) is a green card marriage to prevent her from being deported to Canada . A desperate Tom turns to Mark for help in finding dirt on Ron , and Mark suggests Tom visit an out @-@ of @-@ town bar and speak to Ron 's old friend Duke Silver . Tom visits the bar and learns Duke Silver is actually the alter ego of Ron himself , who secretly plays saxophone in a jazz club . Tom confronts Ron , who immediately calls a truce to the game to prevent his secret from getting out (in the Pilot episode , Mark " cashes in " a favor Ron owes him , probably that) . After watching more footage of DEXHART , Mark decides he wants Ann to learn all his own dark secrets from him . He visits her late at night and tells him about an affair he had with a married woman at age 16 , among other secrets . Although initially confused , Ann is ultimately flattered by the gesture . April (Aubrey Plaza) , disappointed nobody found dirt on her , announces she drove a lawnmower through a Nordstrom department store .

= = Production = =

" Practice Date " was written by Harris Wittels and directed by Alex Hardcastle . The episode featured stand @-@ up comedian Louis C.K. in his third guest performance as Dave Sanderson , a Pawnee police officer romantically involved with Leslie . Kevin Symons also appeared as Pawnee Councilman Bill DEXHART . The sex scandal involving DEXHART mirrored the real @-@ life 2009 scandal of South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford , who publicly admitted to a long @-@ time extramarital affair with an Argentinian woman .

Parks and Recreation co @-@ creator Michael Schur conceived the idea for Ron Swanson 's jazz musician alter ego before they learned Nick Offerman actually played the saxophone in real life , and had for his entire life . Offerman praised the decision : " When he came to me and said , ' You 're going to have an alter ego who plays jazz saxophone , ' I go , ' How do you see inside me ? ' " After the episode broadcast , NBC created an official " Duke Silver " website , which included a biography , discography , reviews , gallery , tour schedule and booking information for the fictional band .

" Practice Date " marked a turning point for the character Jerry . Prior to the episode , Jerry had appeared in every episode , but his personality had not yet been developed . Schur said the Parks and Recreation staff liked Jim O 'Heir , so they cast him in the show and " figured we 'd work it out later " . After the scene when Mark inadvertently reveals Jerry was adopted , the writers built upon that joke and established Jerry as the co @-@ worker the rest of the department picks on . Schur said after " Practice Date " , " We realized that 's who he is : He 's the guy who wants to put his head down and get his pension , but is asking for it all the time . In the next three scripts , it was like throwing chum into the water . Every script after that had 15 slams on Jerry . " Practice Date " marked the first of several appearances by Jay Jackson as Pawnee news reporter Perd Hapley . The character was only originally intended for one appearance , but Schur said the staff enjoyed his performance so much that they made him a recurring character .

Within a week of the episode 's original broadcast , three deleted scenes from " Practice Date " were made available on the official Parks and Recreation website . The first clip features approximately two minutes of extended scenes , including Leslie talking about her anxiety about the date , Ann offering her advice , a drunk Leslie complaining about the heat in Dave 's apartment , which he secretly tells the camera is " freezing cold right now " . The second 75 @-@ second clip features more of Pawnee City Councilman Bill DEXHART 's press conference about the sex scandal . DEXHART refuses to promise he will not continue his transgressions , which he insists is a sign he is no longer lying to Pawnee residents . Reporters also discuss DEXHART 's credit card bills , which include purchases Dong @-@ O @-@ Rama Sex Toy Company , Smut Doctors and a product called " vibrating raisins " . In the third 75 @-@ second clip , Ron discusses in detail his " scientifically perfect ten @-@ point scale of human beauty " , the criteria for which he admits is " extremely misogynistic " . It also included more footage of Ron 's Duke Silver persona , along with interviews by older women who fantasize about him .

= = Cultural references = =

Leslie worries she will bring up the genocide in the Sudanese country Darfur too much , or not enough , during her first date with Dave . While describing his scale of the attractiveness of women , Ron says tennis star Steffi Graf is a " perfect ten " . Ron believes Tom is wearing the robes of the Taliban , a Sunni Islamist political movement , in a photo he finds for the contest . The photo is actually of Tom wearing a Halloween costume of a Jedi from the Star Wars universe . Tom learns one African American co @-@ worker donated money to David Duke , a white nationalist involved in the Ku Klux Klan , because " he promised to lower taxes " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on October 8 , 2009 , " Practice Date " was seen by 4 @. @ 97 million household viewers , according to Nielsen Media Research . The episode received a 2 @. @ 2 rating / 6 share among viewers aged between 18 and 49 . It was an improvement over the previous two episodes , which drew 4 @. @ 22 million household viewers and 4 @. @ 63 million household viewers , respectively .

The episode received generally positive reviews , with several commentators praising it for fleshing out more information about the supporting cast , such as Ron 's jazz singer persona and the back story behind Tom 's marriage and chronic flirting . In an article reflecting on the show 's second season , Slate magazine writer Jonah Weiner dubbed " Practice Date " the episode in which Parks and Recreation " truly hit its stride " . In particular , he called the background @- @ check game " a funny , economical way to bring them more vividly to life " , and said the green card marriage subplot " at once punctured (Tom 's) slimy façade and deepened our sympathies for him " . Entertainment Weekly writer Henning Fog called " Practice Date " " the most satisfying comedy of the week " , even compared to the wedding of Jim and Pam on The Office and a Seinfeld reunion on Curb Your Enthusiasm . Fog said the episode " managed to be sweet and sharp and absolutely hilarious " at once , and praised Poehler 's improvising and Ron 's jazz singer persona , but he said Mark 's appearance at Ann 's house to confess his life 's sins was the episode 's " weak spot " .

Alan Sepinwall of The Star @- @ Ledger said the episode was " completely satisfying - funny when it needed to be , sweet when it wanted to be " . Sepinwall said Jones was particularly funny during the fake date , as well as the " constant one @- @ upsmanship " between Ron and Tom . Matt Fowler of IGN said the episode had a " winning formula " . He particularly praised Jones during the practice date , as well as Jerry 's role during the contest , which Fowler said was a good way to allow the supporting cast to work together . Steve Heisler of The A.V. Club said it seemed like the episode " took everything they were warming up to over the last few weeks , and hit them hard " . Heisler particularly praised Poehler 's performance , as well as the interactions between Ron and Tom . In contrast , however , A.V. Club writer Leonard Pierce said " Practice Date " " was the first time all year I felt like P & R wasn 't firing on all cylinders " .

= = DVD release = =

" Practice Date " , along with the other 23 second season episodes of Parks and Recreation , was released on a four @- @ disc DVD set in the United States on November 30 , 2010 . The DVD included deleted scenes for each episode .