

## = Classy Christmas =

" Classy Christmas " is the collective name for the eleventh and twelfth episodes of the seventh season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's 137th and 138th episodes overall . Written by Mindy Kaling and directed by Rainn Wilson , the episode originally aired on December 9 , 2010 on NBC . " Classy Christmas " guest stars Jack Coleman as Senator Robert Lipton , Rob Huebel as A.J. , Mark Proksch as Nate , and marks the return of Amy Ryan as Holly Flax .

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 , Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) is overjoyed about the return of his old love , Holly Flax ( Ryan ) . Michael forces Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) to plan a second Christmas party on the day Holly returns to Scranton . Meanwhile , Darryl Philbin ( Craig Robinson ) convinces his daughter to attend the party in hopes of meeting Santa Claus . Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) agrees to a snowball fight with Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) , which he later regrets .

The scenes that were filmed outdoors in Los Angeles had to be crafted to look as if it were cold ; in reality , temperatures reached into 90 degrees Fahrenheit , and above . The snowmen used in the episode took a day to create and used over 100 tons of chipped ice . " Classy Christmas " was viewed by 7 @. @ 18 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 7 rating among adults between the age of 18 and 49 , marking a slight drop in the ratings when compared to the previous week . Despite this , the episode was the highest @- @ rated NBC series on the night that it aired . It received largely positive reviews from critics .

## = = Plot = =

Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) learns that Toby Flenderson ( Paul Lieberstein ) will be taking a leave of absence to go on jury duty for the Scranton Strangler trial , leading the corporate office to send Holly Flax ( Amy Ryan ) to cover for him . Michael forces Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) to plan a second , classier Christmas party on the day Holly returns to Scranton . Michael welcomes Holly back , but becomes upset when she tells him that she and A.J. ( Rob Huebel ) are still in a relationship . Holly then tells the women of the office that she 's giving A.J. an ultimatum : either propose to her by year 's end or their relationship is over . Michael lies to Holly and tells her that he 's seeing a woman named Tara from New York , and Holly shows curiosity , but Michael interprets this as potential jealousy . When Michael gets further upset over hearing about Holly 's relationship with A.J. , he takes her toy Woody from Toy Story ? a present from A.J. ? throws it in the trash , and pours his coffee on it . When Holly demands to know who did it , Michael comes forward and admits that he is upset and still has feelings for her . A.J. arrives in Scranton to surprise Holly , and Michael welcomes him politely . After cleaning Holly 's Woody , he leaves the office and Pam follows him out , where he breaks down . In order to lift his spirits , Pam tells him about Holly 's ultimatum , suggesting their relationship is not going to last very long . He returns to the party where he overhears Holly and A.J. talking about Woody , with Holly fabricating a story to cover for Michael 's actions .

Darryl Philbin ( Craig Robinson ) is upset that his daughter Jada would rather spend Christmas with her mother than him . At the party , Jada begins to lose interest , but Pam and Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) try to find fun activities for her ; however , Andy ends up ruining most of them . Darryl then takes her to the break room , where she is impressed with the snacks in the vending machines . They take out the snacks and hand them to employees . When she hands one to Michael , he decides to dress up as Santa again so she can tell him what she wants for Christmas as Holly looks on with admiration .

Pam says that her husband Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) always makes her great Christmas gifts so she wants to make him one too . She creates a hand @- @ drawn comic book about Jim who gets attacked by a radioactive bear and takes its powers . She asks for others ' opinions before giving it to Jim , but most of them give her harsh critiques . Jim gives Pam a beautiful bracelet and

he is equally amazed at the comic book she gives him . Meanwhile , Jim agrees to a snowball fight with Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) . When he is first challenged outside , however , he finds the doors chained . Dwight then emerges from a snowman , throwing multiple snowballs at Jim and leaving him with a bloody nose . Throughout the day , Dwight torments Jim with increasingly elaborate snowball ambushes . Jim tries to surrender , but Dwight refuses . At the end of the day , Jim is too afraid to go outside . He and Pam find multiple snowmen , and Jim attacks them all hoping to find Dwight . Dwight , however , is on the roof of the building , claiming that the most powerful snowball in a snowball fight is fear , and smilingly wishes the camera " Merry Christmas " .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by co @-@ executive producer Mindy Kaling , her eighteenth writing credit for the series . Rainn Wilson , who portrays Dwight Schrute on the series , directed the episode , his second directing credit of the series after the sixth @-@ season episode " The Cover @-@ Up " . The episode was also the first of several season seven episodes that saw the return of Amy Ryan as Holly . Kaling purposely made Dwight " complicated " and " mean " in the script ; she wanted to avoid a situation wherein Jim and Dwight become best friends , calling it something that would happen in a " crappy sitcom feel @-@ good formula . " She wanted to stress the fact that " Jim [ and Dwight ] are not friends . " Kaling specifically wrote Jim to be " off @-@ guard [ and ] surprised " in the episode , because she reasoned that " perfect isn 't always nearly as fun to play or watch as flawed . " The episode was filmed in early November and was shot out of order . This required the assistant directors of The Office to re @-@ dress " the sets from white , spare ' classy Christmas ' look to the elaborate , colorful ' regular Christmas look . ' "

According to Kaling , the group had to pretend like it was cold during the outdoor scenes when it was actually warm . The snow that was used for the snowballs was artificial , and did not cooperate well . According to Kaling , the snowballs would " ' explode ' before they made contact " . While Krasinski and Wilson did not hold back during the fights , neither one was injured ; the blood on Jim 's face and shirt was artificial . The snowmen featured at the end of the episode took a day to construct . In addition , the artificial snow had to be maintained , and footprints had to " be tracked constantly " to maintain continuity . The snowmen were crafted out of 100 tons of chipped ice , and the show 's special effects team created molds and hand @-@ crafted the creations . The scenes featuring the snowmen were shot on the hottest day of the episode 's shoot in Los Angeles , with temperatures reaching above 90 degrees Fahrenheit . The entire crew was outfitted UV @-@ protectant glasses because " snow @-@ blindness was a real possibility . " To prevent heat @-@ related injuries , an on @-@ set medic monitored the staff and crew ; anyone who was slated to appear outside was " slathered in sunscreen " and kept inside until " moments " before each shot .

The Season Seven DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include more scenes of Kelly giving out the Sabre gifts , extended scenes of Toby discussing the Scranton Strangler trial , Jim asking Erin for the first aid kit , and Pam talking about Holly 's ultimatum .

= = Cultural references = =

Michael claims that , to a person from New Hampshire , a fake tree is the same as a burning cross . Darryl mentions that he has a fondness for the Nickelodean series iCarly , specifically complimenting the voice of Freddie Benson , played by Nathan Kress . A line that was cut from the scene features Darryl harshly criticizing the Disney Channel series The Suite Life of Zack & Cody . The gifts that Kelly decides to give to her staff members on Corporate 's behalf are laptop sleeves , featuring the popular fictional character Hello Kitty , which is produced by the Japanese company Sanrio . Holly 's gift from A.J. is a replica of Woody from Toy Story , the 1995 animated Pixar film about friendly toys coming to life when no one is around . When Michael claims he heard Holly would be single , he blames " Nora Ephron and every romantic comedy ever " . Andy disguises himself as the Grinch and steals the Christmas tree 's star for the sake of Jada 's entertainment .

= = Reception = =

" Classy Christmas " first aired on December 9 , 2010 . The episode received 3 @. @ 7 / 10 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 ? 49 according to Nielsen ratings . This means that 3 @. @ 7 percent of all households with an 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ old living in it watched the episode , and ten percent had their televisions tuned to the channel at any point . The episode was watched by 7 @. @ 18 million viewers , dropping in viewers from the previous week , although ratings were adjusted down for NBC due to NFL game local broadcasts in Indianapolis and Nashville . Despite this , the episode was the highest @- @ rated NBC series of the night that it aired .

This episode received mostly positive reviews . James Poniewozik of Time magazine said , " ' Classy Christmas ' may not have been one of the show 's most hilarious episodes ever , but it did recall the best era of the show , when it was able to deliver with storylines that were as much drama as comedy . " He also said that " it was an initially good payment " . TV Fanatic 's Dan Forcella said that " Classy Christmas " was an enjoyable episode and " watching Jim suffer as Dwight jumped out of a snowman and pummeled him with snow ball after snow ball was absolutely hilarious . " Despite this , he also said he wasn 't as good as the second season episode " Christmas Party " . IGN writer Matt Fowler named it the third best Christmas episode of the series calling it a " good episode , with a sweet ending " .

Alan Sepinwall of HitFix called the episode " another standout holiday episode " , and applauded the return of Holly , calling her " welcome " . He enjoyed the episode largely because it was full of " darkness " ; he noted that " I like when The Office aims for something non @- @ comic , so long as it takes its characters seriously , which it did here . " Sepinwall also complimented that subplot featuring Jim being terrorized by Dwight , applauding both Kaling 's writing and Wilson 's directing . Bonnie Stiernberg of Paste magazine argued that the reappearance of Holly ? a signal that Steve Carell 's exit was approaching ? " gifted [ the viewers ] with some of the show 's best writing in a long time . "

Myles McNutt of The A.V. Club gave it a slightly more critical review , awarded it a " B " . He compared the episode the third season episode " A Benihana Christmas " , writing that " both deal with Michael 's heart being broken and the somewhat self @- @ destructive ways he deals with it . " However , he felt that the episode " struggles greatly if you have no emotional connection to Holly and Michael " because it " isn 't funny , by any real stretch of the term , nor is it really intended to be funny . " He went on to say " I like episodes like this one in general and don 't necessarily need the show to make me laugh , but I would say that I wanted this hour to be slightly more ... pleasant . "