

= Christmas Party ( The Office ) =

" Christmas Party " is the tenth episode of the second season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's sixteenth episode overall . It was written by Michael Schur and directed by Charles McDougall . It was first broadcast on December 6 , 2005 on NBC . The episode guest stars David Koechner as Todd Packer .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , the office throws a Christmas party and plays Secret Santa . Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) , having put a lot of effort into finding a gift for Pam ( Jenna Fischer ) , becomes frustrated when Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) makes everyone play " Yankee Swap " , and an iPod that Michael bought for Ryan Howard ( B.J. Novak ) becomes the hot object of the game .

The episode received positive reviews from television critics , with many applauding Michael 's " Yankee Swap " scene . The episode was nominated for two Primetime Emmy awards , one for Outstanding Single @-@ Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series , and one for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series . " Christmas Party " earned a Nielsen rating of 4 @.@ 3 in the 18 ? 49 demographic , being viewed by 9 @.@ 7 million viewers , making it , at the time of its airing , the highest @-@ rated episode of the season .

= = Plot = =

The office staffers hold a " Secret Santa " gift exchange at their Christmas party . Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) received Pam Beesly 's ( Jenna Fischer ) name , and puts a great deal of effort into getting her the perfect gift ( a teapot filled with some small items and a personal letter from him to her ) . Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) buys a \$ 400 video iPod as his gift to Ryan Howard ( B.J. Novak ) , far exceeding the \$ 20 limit . He is disappointed by the handmade item he receives from Phyllis Lapin ( Phyllis Smith ) and introduces a " Yankee Swap " , in which someone can choose to steal someone else 's gift or open a new one .

Jim is left feeling uncertain about the fate of his special present for Pam ? which is eventually claimed by Dwight ? while the staff competes for the iPod . Although Pam ends up with the iPod at the end of the swap , she elects to trade the iPod for Jim 's gift that was meant for her to show her appreciation . While she goes through the various aspects of her gift , Jim sneaks the letter he wrote for her into his pocket .

After ruining his staff 's mood , Michael disobeys company policy by buying an obscene amount of alcohol for the Christmas party to compensate . Everyone ends up having a good time , with the exception of Angela Martin ( Angela Kinsey ) , who is furious that she received no appreciation for her efforts toward arranging the Christmas party , as well as the fact that Kelly makes advances on Dwight , whom Angela is secretly dating . The episode ends with a drunken Meredith Palmer ( Kate Flannery ) exposing herself to a shocked Michael , who takes a picture and then quickly flees .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Christmas Party " was written by Michael Schur , who portrays Mose Schrute in the series . The episode was his third contribution after the first season entry " The Alliance " and second season episode " Office Olympics " . B.J. Novak later noted that , compared to Schur 's previous episode " The Alliance " , the " driving force of the mayhem " in the episode is Michael 's desire to make all of his workers " happy " , rather than him being " a jerk " . The scene wherein Dwight plugs the Christmas tree in , only for the office to be underwhelmed by the dismal lights was based on a real moment Schur and his wife experienced during their first Christmas together . Schur based the Christmas party sequences on a scene in Rushmore that happens after the main character does his

Vietnam play . He noted that he wanted it to be " pastiche @-@ y " and feature " small groups of people talking to each other " . Meredith flashing Michael was based on a real @-@ life experience Greg Daniels 's dad had at a former job ; at the end of one particular Christmas party , there was a stain on the office couch , which he called an " inappropriate ending " for the party . Daniels 's father kept pressuring him to make a Christmas episode of The Office , and so Daniels utilized this experience .

Daniels was unsure as to what to call the Christmas exchange . He had heard the names " Nasty Christmas " , " White Elephant " , and " Yankee Swap " used to describe the game , and so he wrote all three into the script in order " to cover all regions of the country " . Schur created a list of who receives what gift in order to preserve continuity in the episode . Gifts featured in the episode include Toby giving Angela a baby poster , Kelly getting Oscar a shower radio , Michael buying Ryan an iPod , Kevin buying a foot bath for himself , Creed giving Jim an old shirt , Oscar buying Creed a keychain , and Jim purchasing Pam a teapot . The teapot was chosen because it needed to fit other gifts inside of it , as well as be something that Dwight could have a use for later on in the episode . Fischer was allowed to pick the color of the teapot featured in the episode . She picked teal , due to it being her then @-@ husband James Gunn 's favorite color . Jenna Fischer recalled that fans always ask her what Jim wrote in Pam 's note . Fischer noted that John Krasinski wrote the note himself and that the contents are " a secret " . Jim finally gives Pam the note in the penultimate ninth season episode " A.A.R.M. "

Reportedly , the writers for the show wanted Michael to " give a cool gift that the show 's co @-@ workers would later resent " . They eventually decided that he would buy an iPod for Ryan . Apple Inc. received over four minutes of publicity for the device , despite the fact that the company did not pay for the placement . The poster that Toby gives to Angela was created by one of the show 's prop workers . Several of the series ' crew members brought in their own children for the picture , an act that Kate Flannery jokingly called " so great " . Schur revealed in the commentary for the episode that Stanley bought Kelly her nameplate , Dwight 's paintballs were intended for Phyllis , Meredith bought Dwight shot glasses , Ryan got Toby a book of short stories , Angela purchased Stanley a picture frame , and Pam drew Meredith a picture of the office . Pam 's picture was initially drawn by an on @-@ staff artist . However , the producers felt that he was not able to capture Pam 's " feminine side " and so several young female artists were asked to draw the building . One was eventually chosen , and the artists returned to draw Pam 's doodles in the later episode " Boys and Girls " .

== = Directing == =

The episode was directed by Charles McDougall , his first credit for the series . According to Kinsey , McDougal , in order to set the characters ' moods , would start every scene by saying " everyone happy , Angela pissed ! " McDougal sought to bring movement to the Secret Santa scene , due to it being a largely stationary sequence . The cold opening was shot four different times , and almost every time , the ceiling tile that Michael displaces with a tree " crashed through the ceiling and almost killed Steve Carell " . The scene wherein Angela starts crying when the Christmas party descends into chaos was based on a deleted scene from the earlier season two episode " The Fire " , where Angela starts crying during a talking head due to the stress of the situation . The scenes featuring snow were created by a company that specialized in producing fake snow . Daniels was initially worried that the shots would look fake , but he was pleased with the final results . According to Fischer , on the last day of shooting , the cast had a snowball fight ? a scene that is included in the episode ? which she called a " magic moment " . Fischer later recounted that the prop egg nog and pigs in a blanket were kept out for three straight days , an act that she felt was revolting . In order to make her scenes more real Phyllis Smith forced herself to cry for " 30 minutes " between takes . Many of the cast members asked her what was wrong , but Smith refused to speak to them , in order to stay in character . The series ' writers researched local Pennsylvania laws and discovered one that states a liquor salesman must wear a tie . Thus , the show features a liquor store worker wearing a tie . Several of the scenes were improvised on the spot . During the

sequence where Angela angrily throws Christmas bulbs at a wall , Angela Kinsey was unable to get them to break , so she decided to stomp on them . Kate Flannery improvised her line about not drinking only during the week while she was filming her talking head .

During the flashing scene , Carell told Flannery that he " wasn 't staring at " her breasts , rather , he was looking at her clavicle . Despite what it appears on camera , Flannery was not completely topless , as she was wearing pasties . The scene was shot several times ; Flannery admitted that the shooting was excruciating and it felt like they had been shooting the one scene for " 14 hours " . To preserve Flannery 's modesty , the series ' monitors were shut off and the memory card for the digital camera was removed . Carell actually took pictures during the Christmas party shoot . All of the photos were released online .

The Season Two DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Oscar and Creed moving a desk , Phyllis confiding to the camera that her new boyfriend is Bob Vance , Dwight comparing humans opening presents to bears , Kevin singing " Christmas in Hollis " by Run DMC , Angela scolding Kelly , and Michael explaining that Christmas is about seeing people envy the gifts that you give to others .

= = Reception = =

" Christmas Party " originally aired on NBC in the United States on December 6 , 2005 . The episode received a 4 @. @ 3 rating / 10 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @. @ 9 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 . The episode was ranked number one in adults , men , and women in the 18 ? 23 demographic and number one in all key adult male demographics as well . The episode was viewed by 9 @. @ 7 million viewers , making it , at the time , the highest @- @ rated episode of the season . An encore presentation of the episode on December 28 received a 3 @. @ 2 rating / 8 percent share and was viewed by over 6 @. @ 5 million viewers and was ranked number one in the adults 18 ? 34 demographic .

The episode received largely positive reviews from television critics . M. Giant of Television Without Pity gave the episode an " A " grade . Matt Fowler of IGN named the episode the second @- @ best Christmas special of the series , calling it " a classic full of holiday cheer " with " one of the best comedic experiences ever " . The Cincinnati Post named the episode , and specifically the scene where Michael makes the office play " Yankee Swap , " one of the 2005 " Holiday Highlights " . In addition , the episode was nominated for two Primetime Emmy awards , one for Outstanding Single @- @ Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series , and one for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series .

Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A ? " , and applauded its vignette @- @ style presentation , noting that this format " work [ s ] in the show 's favor . " He also applauded the characterization of Michael , writing that it allowed him to " indulge in some David Brent @- @ like behavior without it coming off as a lackluster impression or a bad shade on the show . " Ultimately , he positively commented upon the fact that the episode start The Office 's tradition of delivering usually strong Christmas @- @ themed episodes .

Several lines from the episode were met with critical praise . Fowler cited Michael 's line apologizing for Jesus ' birthday being " so lame " as the best in the episode . TV Fanatic reviewed several of the quotes for the episode . The site ranked Kevin 's admission that he got himself in secret santa , Dwight 's declaration that " Yankee Swap " is like " Machiavelli meets Christmas " , Michael 's explanation about the true meaning of Christmas , and Michael 's question about whether or not 15 bottles of vodka is enough " to get 20 people plastered " , a five out of five .