

= The Front (The Simpsons) =

" The Front " is the nineteenth episode of The Simpsons ' fourth season . It originally aired in the United States on the Fox network on April 15 , 1993 . In the episode , Bart and Lisa decide to write an episode of The Itchy & Scratchy Show ; after their script is rejected , they resubmit it under the name of Abraham Simpson , resulting in Grampa being hired as a staff writer . Meanwhile , Homer returns to high school to retake a failed science course .

The episode was written by Adam I. Lapidus and directed by Rich Moore . It is the only Simpsons episode written by Lapidus .

= = Plot = =

After being disappointed by a new episode of Itchy & Scratchy , Bart and Lisa decide that they can write a better one themselves . Inspired by the sight of Homer accidentally slicing Marge 's hair off with hedge shears , they write a script titled " Little Barbershop of Horrors " , but their episode is rejected by Roger Meyers Jr . , head of Itchy & Scratchy International . Correctly guessing that Meyers did not take them seriously because they were children , they resubmit the manuscript under Grampa 's name , leading Meyers to hire Grampa as a staff writer . Bart and Lisa inform Grampa about what they did and the three of them conspire to continue passing off Bart and Lisa 's scripts as Grampa 's own , splitting the money three ways .

For his work on Itchy & Scratchy , Grampa is nominated for an award for Outstanding Writing in a Cartoon Series . When Grampa sees Itchy & Scratchy for the first time in a clip show introducing the award , he is appalled at the violent humor , and turns his acceptance speech into an assault on both the cartoon and the audience amused by it . He storms off the stage amidst boos and thrown vegetables . Grampa gives the award to Bart and Lisa , and Bart swears never to watch an award show again , unless Billy Crystal is featured .

In the subplot , Homer and Marge attend their " Class of 1974 " high school reunion , where they have a great time and Homer wins a variety of humorous awards . However , Principal Dondelinger interrupts the ceremony to announce that Homer never graduated high school because he failed a remedial science course , leading Dondelinger to revoke Homer 's awards . Determined to win back the accolades , Homer retakes the course and passes the final exam , finally graduating .

The conclusion of the episode features a brief segment , complete with its own theme song , entitled " The Adventures of Ned Flanders " . In the sketch , Ned is upset with his sons for not wanting to go to church , until they inform him that it is Saturday and the family laughs together .

= = Production = =

" The Front " was written by Adam I. Lapidus and directed by Rich Moore . In the early 1990s , Lapidus saw a news report on television about three 13 - year - old girls - Renee Carter , Sarah Creef , and Amy Crosby - who had written a script for Tiny Toon Adventures , titled " Buster And Babs Go Hawaiian " . The show 's executive producer , Steven Spielberg , liked the script so much that he brought the three to Hollywood to work with the show 's writing staff . Upon seeing the report , Lapidus thought , " That would really be a neat idea for Bart and Lisa . " He wrote a spec script , which made its way via executive producer James L. Brooks to the Simpsons staff , who hired Lapidus to write the episode . " The Front " is the only Simpsons episode written by Lapidus , causing some dispute among the show 's fans as to whether he actually exists or was perhaps a pseudonym . Lapidus ' mother @-@ in @-@ law came upon one such debate on an Internet forum .

The initial running time for " The Front " was " way , way short " , and the writers had to use " every trick in the book " to make the episode reach the minimum length . Even after greatly expanding the original script and adding an extra @-@ long couch gag during the opening sequence , the episode was still one minute too short ; " The Adventures of Ned Flanders " was added to address the problem . The segment , which plays at the end of the episode , was designed purely to fill time and

had nothing to do with the other events of the episode . Showrunner Mike Reiss later commented , " As always , when we try something bold and new the general reaction is , ' What the hell was that ? ' " The scene was also an homage to Archie Comics , which sometimes used a similar technique to fill a final page ; the font used in the scene 's title card is similar to the font used by Archie . The short inspired writers Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein to produce the season seven episode " 22 Short Films About Springfield " .

The Fox network censors had two objections to " The Front " . The first issue was with a dream sequence in which Bart points a machine gun at Santa Claus and hijacks his sleigh . The second objection was to a scene not included in the finished episode , in which Itchy & Scratchy animators are seen observing a cat , and then putting a stick of dynamite in the cat 's mouth and lighting it . As Meyers , Bart and Lisa continue down the studio 's corridor , an explosion emanates from the room . The scene was cut because of the implied animal abuse , but is included as a deleted scene on the show 's The Complete Fourth Season DVD boxset .

Marge and Homer 's high school classmate Artie Ziff makes a brief appearance in the episode ; his conversation with Homer inspired the season 13 episode " Half @-@ Decent Proposal " . Artie 's usual voice artist Jon Lovitz was not available , so regular cast member Dan Castellaneta provided the voice instead . The school principal , Dondelinger , was named after someone Sam Simon knew .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode focuses on animation and includes several in @-@ jokes about The Simpsons and the animation industry in general . In a scene depicting the Itchy & Scratchy writer 's lounge , each of the writers shown is a caricature of someone working on The Simpsons at the time . The joke was conceived by the show 's animators . Later in the episode , Roger Meyers fires a Harvard alumnus who resembles Simpsons writer Jon Vitti . At the awards ceremony , The Simpsons creator Matt Groening is shown in the audience . Lisa is also seen reading a book titled How to Get Rich Writing Cartoons by John Swartzwelder , a Simpsons writer credited with nearly sixty episodes of the show . The credits at the end of Bart and Lisa 's Itchy & Scratchy episode (shown in very small print) are a copy of the credits at the end of The Simpsons .

At the Annual Cartoon Awards , the clip from the nominated The Ren & Stimpy Show is merely a black screen with the text " clip not done yet " . This was a counterattack against Ren & Stimpy creator John Kricfalusi , who had attacked The Simpsons staff by saying that " the show succeeded despite the writing " , and similarly derogatory comments . Another industry reference is the " Animation Wing " door at Itchy & Scratchy studios ; the door is identical to a door at the Disney animation building .

Besides copying the Simpsons credits , the Itchy & Scratchy credits also parody the sequence seen at the end of the credits of many TV shows produced by Stephen J. Cannell , where Cannell sits at the typewriter in his office and throws a sheet of paper into the air , with it forming of part of his production company 's logo . In the episode , Itchy and Scratchy are seen at a desk ; Scratchy pulls a sheet from his typewriter and throws it into the air , where it forms an " I & S Productions " logo . Mike Reiss later met Cannell , who was so pleased with the homage that he hugged Reiss . The title of the episode is a reference to The Front , a 1976 film about writers fronting for blacklisted writers in the 1950s . The Simpsons writers considered trying to make the episode plot resemble that of the film , but in the end decided against it .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " The Front " finished 21st in ratings for the week of April 12 ? 18 , 1993 , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 5 , equivalent to approximately 11 @.@ 6 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , beating Married ... with Children .

Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better

Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , praised " The Front " as " an ironic look at the animation industry , with a higher than average Itchy and Scratchy count . The episode is followed by The Adventures of Ned Flanders with its own , rather wonderful , theme tune . "