

= Cape Feare =

" Cape Feare " is the second episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 7 , 1993 , and has since been featured on DVD and VHS releases . Written by Jon Vitti and directed by Rich Moore , " Cape Feare " features the return of guest star Kelsey Grammer as Sideshow Bob , who tries to kill Bart Simpson after getting out of jail . " Cape Feare " is a spoof of the 1962 film Cape Fear and its 1991 remake (which in turn are both based on John D. MacDonald 's 1957 novel The Executioners) , and alludes to other horror films such as Psycho .

The episode was pitched by Wallace Wolodarsky , who wanted to parody Cape Fear . Originally produced for the fourth season , it was held over to the fifth season and was also the last episode to be produced by the show 's original writers , most of whom subsequently left after this episode . The production crew found it difficult to stretch " Cape Feare " to the standard duration of half an hour , and consequently padded certain scenes . In one particular sequence , Sideshow Bob repeatedly steps on rakes , the handles of which then hit him in the face ; this scene became one of the show 's most memorable moments . The episode is generally considered one of the best of the entire series , and the score received an Emmy Award nomination .

= = Plot = =

After receiving numerous death threats in the mail , Bart becomes paranoid . It is revealed that the writer is his enemy , Sideshow Bob , who is incarcerated in Springfield State Prison . The next day , Sideshow Bob 's parole hearing is held ; the parole board is easily convinced that Sideshow Bob is no longer a threat . When the Simpson family goes to the cinema , Sideshow Bob sits in front of them and acts obnoxious . The Simpsons then realize that it was him who sent the letters , and Marge angrily tells him to stay away from Bart.

The Simpsons opt for the Witness Relocation Program and relocate to Terror Lake , changing their surname to " Thompson " and settling in a houseboat . However , unknown to the family as they drive cross @-@ country to their new home , Sideshow Bob has strapped himself to the underside of the car .

During the night , Sideshow Bob reaches the houseboat and cuts it loose from the dock . Bob then ties up Homer , Marge , Lisa , and Maggie , to ensure they will not interfere with his plan . Bob enters Bart 's room , ready to kill him . Bart escapes out the window and tries to escape , but he cannot jump off the boat . As a " last request " , he has an idea : he compliments Sideshow Bob on his beautiful voice and asks him to sing the entire score of the H.M.S. Pinafore , to stall for time as the houseboat floats to Springfield . After the performance , Bob advances on Bart again , but the boat runs aground , and Sideshow Bob is arrested , and the Simpsons return home .

= = Production = =

Sideshow Bob is a recurring character on The Simpsons . Since season three 's " Black Widower " (1992) , the writers have echoed the premise of Wile E. Coyote chasing the Road Runner from the 1949 ? 1966 Looney Tunes cartoons by having Bob unexpectedly insert himself into Bart 's life and attempt to kill him . Executive producer Al Jean has compared Bob 's character to that of Wile E. Coyote , noting that both are intelligent , yet always foiled by what they perceive as an inferior intellect . The scene in which Bob is stomped on by multiple elephants and bounced right back up is a reference to the Wile E. Coyote character .

In Planet Simpson , author Chris Turner writes that Bob is built into a highbrow snob and conservative Republican so that the writers can continually hit him with a rake and bring him down . He represents high culture while Krusty , one of his archenemies , represents low culture , and Bart , stuck in between , always wins out . In the book Leaving Springfield , David L. G. Arnold comments that Bart is a product of a " mass @-@ culture upbringing " and thus is Bob 's enemy .

Bob 's intelligence serves him in many ways . During this episode , for example , the parole board

asks Bob why he has a tattoo that says " Die Bart , Die " . Bob replies that it is German for " The Bart , The " . The board members are impressed and release him because " no one who speaks German could be an evil man " (an allusion to Adolf Hitler) . However , his love of high culture is sometimes used against him . In the same episode , Bob agrees to perform the operetta H.M.S. Pinafore in its entirety as a last request for Bart. The tactic stalls Bob long enough for the police to arrest him .

Even though the episode aired during the beginning of the fifth season , it was produced by the crew of the fourth season . A large part of the original crew left the show after season four . This led to the addition of several scenes , which normally would not have been considered , because the mentality of the departing crew was " what are they going to do , get us fired ? " Although most of the episode was completed by the staff of season four , the end was rewritten by the team of season five .

Wallace Wolodarsky had seen the 1991 version of Cape Fear and pitched the idea of spoofing the film . Jon Vitti was then assigned to write a parody of the original Cape Fear film from 1962 as well as the remake (both films are based on the 1957 novel by John D. MacDonald , entitled The Executioners) . Instead of using the spoof as only a part of the episode , which could have contained a B @-@ story , the entire episode was devoted to this parody . Sideshow Bob was cast as the villain and Bart became the main victim . The episode followed the same basic plot outline as the films and used elements from the original film 's score by Bernard Herrmann (which was also used in the 1991 version) , which , after this episode , became Sideshow Bob 's theme . This episode marked the first time a Sideshow Bob episode was not a mystery .

There were difficulties getting this episode up to the minimum length of an episode and many scenes were added in post @-@ production . The episode starts with a repeat of a couch gag that was first used in the episode " Lisa 's First Word " , which is considerably longer than the typical couch gag . The crew added an Itchy & Scratchy cartoon and a few misleads as to who was trying to kill Bart. Even with all of these additions , the episode still ran short of time . This led to the creation of the rake sequence , which became a memorable moment of the episode , and the entire series . Originally , Sideshow Bob was only supposed to step on one rake after he stepped out from the underside of the Simpson family 's car , but this was changed to nine rakes in a row . According to executive producer Al Jean , the idea was to make the scene funny , then drag the joke out so that it is no longer funny , and then drag it out even longer to make it funny again .

Additions to the end musical number , including visual gags such as Bob appearing in uniform , were added after the animatics . The crew felt that watching the character singing would not be interesting enough and they had to include these gags to make it work . The Simpsons creator Matt Groening was surprised when he saw the additions , because he originally thought they were silly and would not appear in the final cut , but he has grown to like them .

American actor Kelsey Grammer was brought in to guest star as Sideshow Bob for the third time . At that time , Grammer had become a household name as the lead of the television series Frasier , which was in production at the same time as this episode . Grammer did not know that the rake scene was extended , because he had only done the moan once and was surprised when he saw the final product . The show 's writers admire Grammer 's singing voice , and try to include a song for each appearance including this episode . Alf Clausen , the primary composer for The Simpsons , commented that " [Grammer] is so great . He 's just amazing . You can tell he has this love of musical theater and he has the vocal instrument to go with it , so I know whatever I write is going to be sung the way I 've heard it . "

= = Cultural references = =

Besides borrowing the overall plot structure of the Cape Fear films , the episode made several direct references to specific scenes from the films . References to the original include : Marge going to Chief Wiggum only to be told that Sideshow Bob has not broken any laws (also references the 1991 remake) . References to the 1991 remake include : Sideshow Bob 's tattoos ; the shot of him leaving the prison gate ; the scene with him smoking in the movie theater ; part of his " workout "

scene ; his hiding under the Simpson family 's car ; Wiggum 's rigging wire around the house to a toy doll as an alarm ; his suggestion that Homer can do anything to someone who enters his home ; Bob , strapped under a car , pulling up beside Bart for a conversation ; and Homer 's hiring a private investigator who attempts to persuade Bob to leave town .

The episode also contains elements of Alfred Hitchcock 's 1960 film Psycho with Sideshow Bob staying at Bates Motel . Homer surprising Bart with his new hockey mask recalls the film Friday the 13th Part III and Sideshow Bob 's tattoos on his knuckles are similar to those of Robert Mitchum 's character in The Night of the Hunter (Mitchum also played the villain Max Cady in the original 1962 version of Cape Fear) . While singing " Three Little Maids From School Are We " from The Mikado during the car trip to Terror Lake , Homer and Bart 's hats allude to I Love Lucy . The scene featuring Ned with his " finger razors " references the 1984 film A Nightmare on Elm Street and its villain Freddy Krueger (with Flanders seemingly threatening Bart with the razors) and the 1990 film Edward Scissorhands (with Flanders actually using the razors to cut his hedge in the shape of an angel , just as Edward Scissorhands cuts a hedge in the shape of a dinosaur) .

= = Release = =

" Cape Feare " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 7 , 1993 . It finished 32nd in the ratings for the week of October 4 ? 10 , 1993 , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 3 . The episode was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . " Cape Feare " was selected for release in a 1997 VHS collection of episodes titled The Simpsons : Springfield Murder Mysteries , along with " Who Shot Mr. Burns ? (Part 1) " , " Who Shot Mr. Burns ? (Part 2) " and " Black Widower " . It was included again in the 2005 DVD release of the Springfield Murder Mysteries . The episode is also featured on the Simpsons season five DVD set , which was released on December 21 , 2004 . Groening , Jean and Vitti participated in the DVD audio commentary for " Cape Feare " . Kelsey Grammer 's performance of H.M.S. Pinafore was later included on the album Go Simpsonic with The Simpsons . The musical score for the episode earned composer Alf Clausen an Emmy Award nomination for " Outstanding Dramatic Underscore ? Series " in 1994 .

According to Matt Groening , people often include this episode among their top 10 favorites . In Entertainment Weekly 's top 25 The Simpsons episodes ever , it was placed third . To celebrate the show 's 300th episode " Barting Over " , USA Today published a top 10 chosen by the webmaster of The Simpsons Archive , which had this episode at a ninth place . In 2006 , IGN named " Cape Feare " the best episode of the fifth season . Vanity Fair called it the show 's fourth @-@ best episode in 2007 , as " this episode 's masterful integration of filmic parody and a recurring character puts it near the top . " James Walton of The Daily Telegraph characterized the episode as one of " The 10 Best Simpsons TV Episodes " , while the Herald Sun placed it in their " The Simpsons Top 20 " . Karl Åkerström of the Swedish newspaper Borås Tidning called it his " all @-@ time favorite " episode of the show . Michael Moran of The Times and Todd VanDerWerff of Slant Magazine both ranked " Cape Feare " as the fourth @-@ best in the show 's history . Cast member Hank Azaria cited this episode as his favorite in the series .

IGN 's Robert Canning gave the episode a perfect score of 10 out of 10 and named it the best Sideshow Bob episode of The Simpsons . He added that there are " many , many reasons for its perfection , but what stands out most for me was how savage and single @-@ minded Bob is in the episode . He wants to kill Bart and he makes no secret of it , save for lying to the parole board . Episodes since have made Bob far too wishy @-@ washy . This was Bob in his prime ? his vengeful , glorious , hilarious prime . " Canning also placed it at # 1 on the list of the Top 10 Sideshow Bob episodes . Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club noted that the episode " turns limitations into strengths by spinning the need to fill out time into some of the series ' sharpest , funniest and weirdest gags . The Rake Effect might be its greatest gift to comedy but its virtues go far beyond that . Sideshow Bob episodes consistently rank among the show 's best and this represents the gold standard all subsequent Sideshow Bob episodes aspire to . " Empire called Bob 's mishaps while strapped under the Simpsons ' car the eighth @-@ best film parody in the show , and called the rake scene " the best bit of slapstick in Simpson history . " The parody of Cape Fear was named the 33rd greatest

film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum . The Norwegian newspaper Nettavisen listed Sideshow Bob 's " Die Bart , die " tattoo from the episode as the fifth @-@ best tattoo in film and television history .

In 2012 , American playwright Anne Washburn came out with her play Mr. Burns , a Post @-@ Electric Play , which is based on this episode and features its plot as one of the main elements of the play .