

= Homer and Apu =

" Homer and Apu " is the thirteenth episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 10 , 1994 . In the episode , Homer participates in a hidden camera investigation of the expired meat selling at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart . Apu is immediately fired and replaced by actor James Woods , who is doing research for a role in an upcoming film . Apu begins to miss his job at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , so in an attempt to get it back , Apu and Homer travel to India to talk with the head of the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart corporation .

The episode was written by Greg Daniels , and directed by Mark Kirkland . James Woods made a guest appearance as himself . The episode features cultural references to films such as The Hard Way , JFK , and Lawrence of Arabia . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 13 @. @ 3 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

At the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , Apu is selling items to customers at outrageous prices , like normal . Apu scribbles out the best before date and then lowers the price on expired ham from 1989 instead of throwing it out . Homer buys the meat , eats it , and contracts food poisoning . After recovering , Homer returns to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart to complain , and Apu gives him two five @-@ pound buckets of expired shrimp to placate him . Homer eats the shrimp and gets the same symptoms . Whilst recovering at home , Homer sees the investigative news program Bite Back with Kent Brockman , hosted by Channel 6 journalist Kent Brockman . Lisa gives him the idea to get the show to investigate the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart . Kent gives Homer a giant novelty hat containing a spy camera to expose Apu for selling expired food . Though Homer almost immediately abandons the hat after mistaking the buzzing of the machinery as a bee , the camera catches Apu placing a hotdog in the bain @-@ marie that he had recently dropped on the ground . Apu is immediately fired by his company ( even though he actually follows the company " ethics " ) , and is replaced by actor James Woods , who is doing research for a role in an upcoming film .

After being fired , Apu appears at the Simpsons home , acting like he 's about to strangle Homer , but this turns out to be the bizarre traditional form of apology of Apu 's village , because he thinks that he is in debt to Homer for selling him expired food , and helping him would pay off his debt of karma . At first , Homer is reluctant to accept his help , as " karma can only be portioned out by the cosmos ! " , but as time goes by , the family begins to love Apu and his dutiful behavior ( especially after he helps Marge buy products in another market , and cooks an exotic Indian dinner for the family ) . However , Apu misses his job at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , so Homer decides to help him by accompanying him to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart head office in India . Once they arrive , they meet with the head of the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart corporation , who says that they can ask him three questions . Unfortunately , Homer wastes the three questions ( " Are you really the head of the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? ! " , " Really ? ! " , and " You ? ! " ) , and the head of the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart does not help Apu with his problems . An enraged Apu chokes Homer ( which is mistaken for another apology ) before they return home disappointed .

When they get home to Springfield , Apu decides to return to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart to " face his demons " . A robber bursts into the store and shoots at Woods , but Apu saves him by jumping in front of the bullet . At the hospital , Dr. Hibbert says that Apu survived because the bullet ricocheted off another bullet that was lodged in his chest from a previous robbery . Eternally grateful , Woods gives Apu his job back , and goes away to fight against extraterrestrial beings in his next ' movie ' .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Greg Daniels , and directed by Mark Kirkland . It was the first full episode of the show that Daniels wrote . The Simpsons writers Al Jean and Mike Reiss , who were

show runners during the previous two seasons , came up with the idea for the episode . They left the idea with David Mirkin , who took over the job as show runner during this season . Mirkin said he was " very excited and intrigued " with the idea of the episode . Soon thereafter , he assigned Daniels to write the script because he knew that Daniels would " step up " and " throw himself into it " . In an interview with the Chicago Tribune , Mirkin stated that when he took over the show , he wanted to " bring it back " to character and story , unlike the previous season which got " so fast @-@ moving and so full of cutaway gags " . Mirkin added : " I explored the characters a little more , took them a little further . I had one of the first episodes where Homer was really tempted by another woman , " The Last Temptation of Homer " , and Bart having a girlfriend even nastier than himself , " Bart 's Girlfriend " , plus more of a focus on side characters . We did the first episode to really feature Apu as a main character . Those were my goals . " Kirkland said he was grateful that he got to work with a " wonderful crew " on the episode , including Bob Anderson , who he thought was a " wonderful " director . Kirkland said that Anderson assisted him on the episode and did " fine animation throughout " .

When Mirkin took over as show runner , he listed actor James Woods as one of the people he would most like to guest star on the show . Michael Caine was originally supposed to be the actor in the episode who takes over Apu 's job at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , but he rejected the role . The story was therefore rewritten so that Woods received Apu 's job instead . Woods was one of animation director David Silverman 's favorite guest stars . Mirkin said he provided one of the " most fantastic " performances ever on the show , and commented that he " nailed " all of his lines and was " so funny , right at the top of his head " . Mirkin said that when most guest stars come in to record their lines for the show , they are a little nervous because they have never done voice @-@ over before . Mirkin noted , however , that Woods was a " fearless guy " and he was " so excited to do it because he was a huge fan of the show " . Silverman noted that in addition to his humorous ad @-@ libbing , Woods 's tendency to hesitate while speaking was " great for animation " , explaining that it made the character feel more realistic . " Homer and Apu " features the popular Simpsons song " Who Needs The Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? " , sung by Apu and the Simpson family . The song was written by all of the show 's writers in the writer 's room , and it was composed by Alf Clausen . The song later appeared on the soundtrack album Songs in the Key of Springfield , which was released on March 18 , 1997 , and compiled many musical numbers from the show .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode features cultural references to many American and British films . Woods becoming a convenience store clerk to prepare for a film is similar to Nick Lang ( Michael J. Fox ) becoming a police officer in the 1991 film The Hard Way , which Woods also starred in ( interestingly , this is a reversal of roles : Woods played the cop that Lang was saddled with in the film ) . When Kent asks Homer if he is willing to go undercover to " nail " Apu , Homer replies : " No way , man , get yourself another patsy ! " This is a reference to a line in the 1991 film JFK . The scene of Homer and Apu riding on mules to the Springfield Airport , with their luggage strapped to the mules ' backs , is similar to a scene from the 1962 film Lawrence of Arabia . In his Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart job interview , the interviewer asks Woods why he would want to work at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , to which he replies : " To be honest , in my upcoming movie I 'm going to be playing this tightly @-@ wound convenience store clerk and , I kind of like to research my roles and really get into it . For instance , in True Believer I actually worked in a law firm for two months . And then , the film Chaplin I had a little cameo in that . I actually traveled back in time , back to the twenties , where ... Well , I 've said too much , " referencing the 1989 film True Believer and the 1992 film Chaplin .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings and critical reviews = = =

In its original American broadcast , " Homer and Apu " finished twenty @-@ sixth in the ratings for the week of February 7 ? 13 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 3 . The episode was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . The song " Who Needs The Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? " was nominated for an Emmy Award in the " Outstanding Individual Achievement in Music and Lyrics " category , but lost to " The Song Remembers When " from the television special Trisha Yearwood : The Song Remembers When .

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , wrote : " One of the very best , with the gags coming thick and fast . We particularly like the spy camera concealed in Homer 's massive stetson , Apu and Marge 's trip to the Monster Mart , and ' Who Needs the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? ' , possibly the cleverest song in the series . And the Christians harassing people at the Indian airport , and Homer 's wastage of three questions , and James Woods ' parting words to the Simpsons , and the footage of Apu doing a hummingbird impression ... " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said : " The first episode to focus on Apu , this one works well . Our glimpses of Apu 's sleaziness and culture are entertaining , and the ' Who Needs the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? ' tune is one of the better musical numbers [ of the show ] . " Jacobson went on to say : " Also count James Woods as one of the all @-@ time best guest stars , which is likely why he gets many more lines than the average cameo voice . " Total Film 's Nathan Ditum named Woods ' performance in the episode the 19th best guest appearance on The Simpsons .

Patrick Bromley of DVD Verdict gave the episode a grade of A + and commented that it features one of the best musical numbers in the show 's " history of great musical numbers " . Adam Suraf of Dunkirkma.net named it the best episode of the season , and added : " I don 't know what it is about this episode ? the ' Who Needs the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ? ' song number ; James Woods filling in for Apu at the store ; or Homer 's wise line ' I 've learned that life is one crushing defeat after another until you just wish Flanders was dead ' ? but the entire affair is inspired . [ ... ] It 's in the little details that make this episode the year 's best , and solidifies The Simpsons as the funniest sitcom of all time . " AskMen.com ranked " Homer and Apu " as number six on their list of the top ten The Simpsons episodes . Bill Gibron of DVD Talk gave the episode a score of 5 out of 5 .

= = = Analysis = = =

The episode has become study material for sociology courses at University of California Berkeley , where it is used to " examine issues of the production and reception of cultural objects " . In the book Leaving Springfield , Duncan Beard said the episode served as a parody of the peculiarities of the American convenience store . Beard particularly cited the Muzak and the dingling bell as Homer and Apu entered the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart in India , and the sign that read , " The Master Knows All ( except combination to safe ) " . Beard said , " Here the show presents its own instance of the global culture of consumer capitalism , transplanted intact and indistinguishably unaltered from the suburbs of America to a mountain top in some indefinable region of the post @-@ partitioned Commonwealth nation of India , purely for the purpose of parodically criticizing the banality of quick @-@ stop stores . "

Paul Cantor , who analyzed the episode in his book Gilligan Unbound : Pop Culture in the Age of Globalization , said , " The Simpsons could offer no better image of the bizarre logic of contemporary globalization than a worldwide convenience store empire run by an enlightened guru from the sacred mountains of India . " Cantor also specifically cited the " Master Knows " sign , which he said combined the perceived wisdom of the East with the business acumen of the West .

Tasleem Shakur and Karen D 'Souza write in their book Picturing South Asian culture in English that " Homer and Apu " typifies the key articulation of the character of Apu juxtaposed to Homer , " something like his alter @-@ ego " , where Homer is the all American , Duff drinking , rather lazy nuclear plant worker , and Apu is the immigrant , clean living , hard working , small businessman . Their friendship , the authors added , is typically of a strong degree of mutual respect and a kind of

admiration for what the other represents .