

= Homie the Clown =

" Homie the Clown " is the 14th episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 12 , 1995 . When Krusty the Clown opens a clown college to deal with his debt , Homer Simpson enrolls and ends up impersonating Krusty at public events . Mistaking him for the real clown , the Springfield Mafia kidnaps Homer , demanding their money . Joe Mantegna returned as Fat Tony , while Dick Cavett and Johnny Unitas guest starred as themselves .

The episode was conceived and written by John Swartzwelder and directed by David Silverman . Swartzwelder 's script required very little rewriting and Silverman considers this one of the best episodes he has directed . He later used it to help him when directing The Simpsons Movie . One dropped storyline for The Simpsons saw Krusty being revealed as Homer 's secret identity and this episode allowed writers to comment upon the similarity of the two characters ' design . The episode features references to Close Encounters of the Third Kind , The Godfather and The Maltese Falcon .

= = Plot = =

Krusty 's massive gambling debts and extravagant personal life land him in deep trouble with the Springfield Mafia and only a month away from bankruptcy . To make money , he launches a training college for clowns . Homer sees an advertisement about the college and at first says that it had no effect on him , but then becomes obsessed with it , eventually announcing to his startled family that he is going to enroll . After graduating , he impersonates Krusty at private and public events that the real Krusty deems unworthy of his personal appearance .

At first , the stress of impersonating Krusty makes Homer consider quitting . However , he discovers that he receives all sorts of benefits from authority figures and businesses that mistake him for Krusty due to their uncanny resemblance . The impersonation goes too far when Homer is kidnapped by the mafia , who mistake him for the real clown that owes them money . Mob boss Don Vittorio DiMaggio tells Homer he will kill him unless he performs a loop @-@ de @-@ loop on a tiny bicycle , the only trick Homer never learned to do . He fails , but the real Krusty arrives and the confused Don instead forces them to perform the trick together . The trick is a success and their lives are spared , but Krusty still has to pay off his debt to the mob ? a total of \$ 48 . Krusty pays them with a \$ 50 bill , and gets his change back .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by David Silverman . Swartzwelder came up with the idea and his script required very little rewriting . The episode is one of Silverman 's favorites and he was pleased to direct it , after enjoying Swartzwelder 's script . Silverman felt he himself " brought a lot to the party on [this] one , " and although " people didn 't like [Swartzwelder 's script] at the read @-@ through , " Silverman thought " the script was really funny , and I had an idea for the opening and presented it with a lot of circus music that inspired the music they used for it . It was great fun . " He used it , along with " Three Men and a Comic Book " , to help him when directing The Simpsons Movie .

Brad Bird also helped Silverman , particularly with Krusty 's design . An early idea for The Simpsons saw Krusty the Clown being revealed as Homer Simpson 's secret stage identity . This storyline never developed , but this episode allowed writers to comment upon the design similarity of the two characters . Krusty 's appearance and design is just that of Homer 's , with clown make @-@ up . Silverman enhanced the lines under Krusty 's eyes , and reshaped his beard line in order to make a clearer distinction between the two characters .

Homer beating up the Estonian dwarf (who first appeared in " Burns ' Heir ") was a joke Matt Groening " had trouble with " . David Mirkin wanted the scene to be violent , but Silverman stated that he thought he had animated the finished product to be too realistic . However , nothing was

changed . Fox objected to the mafia buying ammunition from a Big 5 Sporting Goods until Mirkin pointed out that Big 5 sold ammunition . The second act break was , up until the animatic , after Fat Tony 's line " cancel the world search " .

Joe Mantegna returned as Fat Tony . Mirkin said Mantegna is a joy to direct and that Mantegna loves the role so much , he wishes to voice him " even if he only coughs " . Dick Cavett guest starred as himself . Mirkin commented that Cavett 's part was probably the " meanest " they had ever been to a guest star . Cavett often told stories involving himself and other famous people and Mirkin decided to make light of that . Cavett did not have any objections .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode 's title is reference to the character Homey the Clown from the sketch comedy show In Living Color . Krusty lights a cigarette with an issue of Action Comics # 1 , the first appearance of Superman , and one of the rarest comic books of all @-@ time , while Homer forms his mashed potatoes into a circus tent in a parody of Richard Dreyfuss ' character forming his potatoes into a replica of Devils Tower in the 1977 film Close Encounters of the Third Kind . The episode contains several references to films related to organized crime , such as the notes played on the wine glasses during Homer and Krusty 's bicycle trick forming those of the theme from the film The Godfather . Additionally , Silverman inserted a low @-@ angle shot of Fat Tony sitting in a chair as a tribute to a similar shot of Sydney Greenstreet 's character in The Maltese Falcon , while Don Vittorio is based on actors William Hickey and Don Ameche .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Homie the Clown " finished 59th (tied with Behind Closed Doors II) in the ratings for the week of February 5 to February 12 , 1995 , helping Fox to an overall Nielsen rating of 7 @.@ 9 . The episode was the fifth highest rated show on the Fox network that week .

Mike Brantley of The Mobile Register named " Homie the Clown " the 48th greatest television episode of all @-@ time . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , stated the episode was " notable for its scenes of Homer on trying to emulate Krusty 's mini @-@ trike loop the loops . " Ryan Keefer of DVD Verdict felt it " features one of the more amusing stunts to cap an episode " , giving it an A. Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide said in a review of the sixth season DVD that the episode " offers a truly terrific show , " and also praised the " clever Close Encounters reference , and the ways that it ties together Krusty 's mob connection with Homer , " concluding " it 's a real winner . "