

= Two Bad Neighbors =

" Two Bad Neighbors " is the 13th episode of The Simpsons ' seventh season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 14 , 1996 . In the episode , the Simpson family is having a garage sale . Right when the sale gets moving , George H. W. Bush , the 41st President of the United States , voiced in the episode by Harry Shearer , upstages Homer by moving in across the street , and Homer develops a grudge against George . After George gives Bart a spanking , Homer starts a prank war , which escalates into a one @-@ on @-@ one confrontation that results in the Bushes leaving Springfield .

The episode was written by Ken Keeler and directed by Wesley Archer . It was inspired by the animosity towards the show by the Bushes from earlier in the series ' run . It features cultural references to the 1959 TV Series Dennis the Menace , and Cheap Trick 's 1979 song " Dream Police " . Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from fans and television critics , and Vanity Fair named it the fifth best episode of the show . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 9 , and was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Evergreen Terrace is holding a street @-@ wide rummage sale in Springfield . As Homer dances on the tables selling the items (upstaging Ned Flanders in the process) , there is a diversion : the empty house across the street is being moved into . It is occupied by former President George H. W. Bush and his wife Barbara , and Homer takes an instant disliking toward George for getting more attention from the neighbors and hanging out with his friends . After Ned Flanders and his family came over to visit the Bushes as George takes a liking to Ned , Bart decides to visit , and Barbara takes a liking to him . However , Bart 's habit of calling adults by their first names and his overall annoying attitude irritates George . Eventually , after Bart accidentally shreds George 's newly typed memoirs , the former President takes Bart across his knee and spansks him . Upon learning this , an outraged Homer confronts George , demanding an apology for spanking Bart , but Bush refuses and instead demands Homer to apologize . Both men vow to make trouble for each other , despite that Barbara suggests to George that he should apologize to Homer .

First , Homer sends bottle rockets at George 's window , and George puts up a banner on his house saying " Two Bad Neighbors " , in reference to Bart and Homer (but is forced to remove it when other neighbors interpret it as an act of self @-@ abnegation) . Homer then glues a rainbow @-@ colored wig on his opponent 's head just before he is to give an important speech to a local club after he places cardboard cutouts of his sons , George Bush Jr. and Jeb Bush on his front yard to trick him . George retaliates by destroying the Simpsons ' lawn with his car . Despite Barbara and Marge urging their husbands to stop , the confrontation continues . Homer and Bart are just making their way through the sewers to release locusts (from Edmund Scientific) in George 's house when George spots them and climbs down . Homer demands , once again , that Bush apologize for spanking Bart , but George refuses , demanding that Bart apologize for destroying his memoirs , something that Homer becomes aware of just now but still refuses to apologize . As Homer and George begin fighting , Bart releases the locusts , which promptly attack George .

At the same time , former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev arrives at the mansion to bring a housewarming present for the Bush family . He later finds Homer and George busting out of the sewers , fighting , until George recognizes Gorbachev . Finally having enough , Barbara forces George to apologize to Homer for spanking Bart , and he does so in front of Gorbachev (much to his humiliation) , leaving Homer to finally happily taunt George . Believing that the neighborhood is not worth living in , George decides to sell the house to Gerald Ford , another former President as he and Barbara leave Springfield for good . Ford invites Homer to watch a football game with beer and Nachos at his house . The two quickly get off to a good start , sharing common ground .

= = Production = =

== Background ==

The show had a feud with the Bushes that eventually led to the idea for this episode . In the October 1 , 1990 , edition of People , Barbara Bush called The Simpsons " the dumbest thing [she] had ever seen " which had led to the writers sending a letter to Bush where they posed as Marge Simpson . Bush immediately sent a reply in which she apologized .

On January 27 , 1992 , then @-@ current President George H. W. Bush made a speech during his re @-@ election campaign that reignited the feud between The Simpsons and the Bushes . At that point , family values were the cornerstone of Bush 's campaign platform , to which effect he gave the following speech at the National Religious Broadcasters ' convention in Washington , D.C. : " We are going to keep on trying to strengthen the American family , to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons " . The next broadcast of The Simpsons was a rerun of " Stark Raving Dad " on January 30 , 1992 . It included a new opening , which was a response to Bush 's speech . The scene begins in the Simpsons ' living room . Homer , Patty and Selma sit on the couch . Bart and Lisa are sprawled on the carpet . They all stare at the television and watch Bush 's speech . After Bush 's statement , Bart replies " Hey , we 're just like the Waltons . We 're praying for an end to the Depression too . "

== Writing ==

Bill Oakley , who was a writer on The Simpsons at the time , came up with the idea for " Two Bad Neighbors " two years before the production began . Oakley got the inspiration for the episode after the feud between the Bushes and the Simpson family , and two years later when he and Josh Weinstein became showrunners of The Simpsons , they assigned Ken Keeler to write it . Oakley said that Bill Clinton had been President of the United States for several years at the point when the episode went into production , so the feud had " faded off into oblivion " . The staff therefore thought it would be funny if the two parties encountered each other again .

Weinstein said that the episode is often misunderstood . Many audiences expected a political satire , while the writers made special effort to keep the parody apolitical . Oakley stresses that " it 's not a political attack , it 's a personal attack ! " , and instead of criticizing Bush for his policies , the episode instead pokes fun at his " crotchitness " . Oakley considered the episode to lack many " zany " jokes common for the show at that time , and described the episode as a companion piece to the season eight episode " Homer 's Enemy " , in that a realistic character (Frank Grimes in that case) is placed in the unrealistic Simpsons universe and juxtaposed alongside Homer , creating conflict .

In an interview with the Simpsons fan site NoHomers.net , Weinstein was asked if there had been any stories that he had come up with that did not make it into the show , to which he replied : " The great thing about The Simpsons is that we pretty much were able to get away with everything , so there weren 't any episodes we really wanted to do that we couldn 't do . Even the crazy high @-@ concept ones like ' Two Bad Neighbors ' and ' Homer 's Enemy ' we managed to put on the air because honestly there were no network execs there to stop us . "

At the end of the episode , Gerald Ford moves into the house across the street after Bush leaves . When originally conceived , Richard Nixon was going to move in instead , though this was changed to Bob Dole following Nixon 's death . The writers then decided it would be funnier if it were Ford since they believed he was the politician who best represented Homer . Keeler 's first draft also included a musical number in the style of Tom Lehrer 's satirical recordings , although this ended up being cut .

The episode features the first appearance of Disco Stu , who became a recurring character in the series . Stu was originally designed as a withered , old John Travolta @-@ esque figure and was to be voiced by repeat guest star Phil Hartman . However , when the animators remodeled the character , Hartman was not available to dub the voice and so Hank Azaria took over the role .

== Merchandise ==

" Two Bad Neighbors " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 14 , 1996 . The episode was selected for release in a 2000 video collection of selected political episodes of the show , titled : The Simpsons Political Party . The episode appeared on the second volume of the collection , together with the episode " Duffless " from season four . The episode was included in The Simpsons season 7 DVD set , which was released on December 13 , 2005 . Keeler , Oakley and Weinstein participated in the DVD 's audio commentary , alongside Matt Groening and the director of the episode , Wes Archer .

= = Cultural references = =

The relationship between Bart and George is a homage to the United States television series Dennis the Menace from 1959 , with the Bushes standing in for Dennis ' elderly neighbors , the Wilsons . In response to George spanking Bart , Grandpa says : " Big deal ! When I was a pup , we got spanked by Presidents till the cows came home . Grover Cleveland spanked me on two non @-@ consecutive occasions , " referring to Grover Cleveland , the only president to have served two non @-@ consecutive terms in office . When Homer and Bart hand out fliers for the upcoming garage sale , Apu Nahasapeemapetilon is seen washing his car while singing Cheap Trick 's 1979 song " Dream Police " . Homer 's song at the rummage sale is set to the tune of the songs " Big Spender " and " Stayin ' Alive " . The threat by Bush to Homer , " I 'll ruin you like a Japanese banquet ! " refers to the George H. W. Bush vomiting incident in which Bush , reportedly sick with the 24 hour flu , threw up on the lap of , then @-@ Prime Minister of Japan , Kiichi Miyazawa , the banquet 's host , before fainting . Gerald Ford 's public image is referenced at the end of the episode when he and Homer find that they share common ground , and they then both trip while walking toward the former 's house . Ford acquired a reputation as a clumsy , likable and simple @-@ minded Everyman (similar to Homer) , highlighted by an incident in 1975 when he tripped while exiting the presidential jet in Austria , which was then famously and repetitively parodied on Saturday Night Live .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Two Bad Neighbors " finished 52nd in the ratings for the week of January 7 to January 14 , 1996 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 9 . The episode was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following the Post Game NFC Championship .

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from fans and television critics . It was named by Vanity Fair 's John Ortved as the show 's fifth best episode . Ortved said , " While the Simpsons people have always claimed evenhandedness in their satire , the show is , after all , hardly right @-@ leaning , and it is hard to miss how gleefully the former President is mocked here . " Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the UK authors of I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , wrote : " Very strange , this episode takes The Simpsons into a whole new dimension of political satire . The lampooning of a single public figure is a startling move . Works much better for Americans , we 're told " .

Dave Foster of DVD Times said : " Once again showing the mischievous relationship Bart and Homer share their pranks and the inevitable confrontations with George Bush Senior are as hilarious as they are implausible and frequent , but there is much to love about this episode in which the writers think out loud and paint The Simpsons and its characters as Bush once did . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson enjoyed the episode and said that it " offers the kind of episode that only The Simpsons could pull off well . The idea of bringing a president to live in Springfield is high @-@ concept to say the least , and it could ? and probably should ? have bombed . However , the silliness works well and turns this into a great show . " John Thorpe of Central Michigan Life named it the second best episode of the show , and Rich Weir of AskMen.com named it the ninth best episode .

