

= Sunday , Cruddy Sunday =

" Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " is the twelfth episode of The Simpsons ' tenth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 31 , 1999 , just after Super Bowl XXXIII and the premiere of Family Guy . In the episode , while buying new tires for his car , Homer meets a travel agent called Wally Kogen . After becoming friends , Kogen offers Homer a free bus ride to the Super Bowl , as long as he can find enough people to fill Kogen 's bus . Several people , including Bart , tag along what soon becomes a problematic trip . Meanwhile , Marge and Lisa set out to find the missing parts of " Vincent Price 's Egg Magic " , a celebrity @-@ endorsed craft kit .

" Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " was directed by Steven Dean Moore and written by George Meyer , Brian Scully , Mike Scully and Tom Martin , the first credit Martin received for the series . Mike Scully jokingly said that the episode was " thrown together [...] without thought or structure " by the writers . For the subplot , the writers tried to come up with the " most boring thing " Lisa and Marge could do to pass time . The episode features several guest @-@ stars , including comedian Fred Willard , country singer Dolly Parton , Fox CEO Rupert Murdoch , sports commentators Pat Summerall and John Madden , and former American football players Troy Aikman , Rosey Grier and Dan Marino . All guest @-@ stars played themselves , except for Willard who portrayed Kogen . The episode pokes fun at folk singer Burl Ives , former United States president Bill Clinton as well as the series ' fans , among other things .

In its original broadcast , the episode was seen by approximately 11 @.@ 5 million viewers , making it the tenth most watched program of the week as well as the second most watched scripted program on the network the night it aired . The episode was released on home video for the first time in 2004 , and in 2007 , the episode was again released as part of the DVD set The Simpsons ? The Complete Tenth Season . Following its broadcast , the episode received mostly positive reviews from critics .

After its original broadcast , however , a scene in the episode involving a fictitious , sexually suggestive Super Bowl commercial for the Catholic Church became a subject of controversy . The scene garnered scrutiny from the American Catholic anti @-@ defamation and civil rights organization The Catholic League , whose members sent hundreds of angry letters to the Fox network , demanding any mention of Catholicism in the episode be excised . In September the same year , when the episode was supposed to repeat , the Catholic League asked Fox if they could censor the scene , which the network agreed to . The network 's decision was criticized by journalists and staff members . The censored version of the episode is still in syndication .

= = Plot = =

When Bart , Lisa and the students of Springfield Elementary go on a field trip to the post office , Bart gets a coupon book as a souvenir , which he gives to Homer as a birthday present . Homer uses one of his coupons at a tire business on a free wheel balancing , and is told by the " customer care specialist " that his car will not take a balance , and that he will need four new tires because they cannot legally let customers drive off with faulty tires . Homer reluctantly accepts , and meets Wally Kogen , a travel agent . They go to Moe 's for a beer , watching a special on the Super Bowl . Wally says his travel agency has a charter bus going to the game and suggests to Homer that he can fill the bus and ride for free . They ask Moe to come to the Super Bowl and he agrees , as do other prominent men of Springfield .

Homer and Bart go to the Super Bowl with their posse at Miami 's Pro Player Stadium on the charter bus and arrive for pre @-@ game festivities . Expecting to get in the game , they are stopped when they are told that the tickers Wally had bought were counterfeit . However , Bart notices a rack of costumes meant for the halftime show , and Homer use it to knock over security and rush inside . However , stadium security quickly catches them , and they are locked up in the stadium jail where the group vents their frustration by kicking Homer in the buttocks one @-@ by @-@ one . They are freed when Kogen 's friend Dolly Parton uses her extra @-@ strength makeup remover to dissolve the lock and release them . As they are freed , they run into a skybox suite and

get a view of the game , until the skybox 's owner Rupert Murdoch arrives and confronts them . Homer 's posse flee to the field , chased by Murdoch 's security , until they get lost in the sea of victorious players . The group ends up in the locker room where they share the celebration , and everyone has a Super Bowl ring on one of their hands at game 's end .

Meanwhile , Marge and Lisa try to find their own activity at home . They use the crafting kit , " Vincent Price 's Egg Magic " , until they realize that the product was shoddy because the feet were not included . Despite the kit being from 1967 , Marge decides to call the help @-@ line number listed on the box . Surprisingly , she is greeted with the voice of Price ? who assures her that his grandson Jody will bring the missing feet to them . Lisa expresses surprise , believing the actor to be dead . The episode ends with John Madden and Pat Summerall analyzing the events of the episode . Despite endorsing Kogen and the subplot , they are infuriated by a Super Bowl episode guest starring Parton that does not feature " any football or singing " . Madden declares the episode a slap to the show 's fanbase , who he says have taken " so much nonsense " from the franchise . They eventually leave on a bus driven by Price , which " doesn 't make a lick of sense " according to Madden .

= = Production = =

" Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " was directed by Steven Dean Moore and co @-@ written by former staff writers Tom Martin , George Meyer , Brian Scully and executive producer and former showrunner Mike Scully . It was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on January 31 , 1999 , right after Super Bowl XXXIII and the premiere of Family Guy . " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " was the first episode that Martin received a writing credit for , and in the DVD audio commentary for the episode , he stated that he " loved " writing the episode . The writing process for the episode was " kind of unusual " , since the writers " threw it [the episode] together " without , Scully quipped , thinking of " things such as thought and structure " . A scene in the episode shows Homer buying new tires for his car . The scene was written by Brian Scully , who had been scammed by a Firestone Tire and Rubber Company dealer . The episode 's subplot was the result of the Simpsons writers trying to find activities for Marge and Lisa to participate in while Bart and Homer were at the Super Bowl . According to Martin , the writers were trying to come up with " the most boring thing " Marge and Lisa could do to pass time . After hearing cast member Dan Castellaneta 's impression of Vincent Price , the writer 's found the impression to be so funny that they based the subplot on the fictional crafts set " Vincent Price 's Egg Magic " .

In a scene in the episode , Homer and Kogen are in Moe 's tavern , discussing their favourite football teams with Moe . When Moe mentions that his favourite team is the Atlanta Falcons , he holds a glass in front of his mouth , obscuring his lip movements . He then passes the same glass to Homer , who does the same . Originally , the characters would be saying something else , however , because the staff wanted the episode to be " current " , new dialogue was recorded for the scene . Because there was no time to animate the scene from scratch , the staff simply made the characters hold a glass in front of their mouths while saying their lines . This technique was also used in reference to the ongoing impeachment scandal , as when the characters mention that the President and First Lady will be there , they cover their mouths when calling them by name . The song that plays during the bus trip to the Super Bowl was performed by NRBQ . The episode also features British rock band Blur 's " Song 2 " , which plays during the " race " to the stadium .

The episode features American comedian Fred Willard as Wally Kogen . Scully stated that , for many years , the Simpsons staff had wanted Willard to guest @-@ star in an episode , and that they had been looking for a character for Willard to portray . Scully also stated that Willard was " great fun " to have on the show . Wally Kogen 's name is taken from two former writers on The Simpsons ; the character 's first name , Wally , is taken from Wallace Wolodarsky , and the character 's last name , Kogen , is taken from Jay Kogen . The episode also features former football players Rosey Grier , Troy Aikman and Dan Marino as themselves . Scully stated that , when athletes guest @-@ star in television shows , their performances are " not always the greatest " , however , he asserted , Aikman , Grier and Marino were all " really funny " and " did a great job " . Country singer Dolly

Parton guest @-@ starred as herself as well . Scully stated that he was " shocked " by how short Parton was , however he added that she was " very nice " and " thrilled " to be in the episode . Also featured in the episode is Rupert Murdoch , creator of the Fox Broadcasting Company . Originally , the writers wanted Murdoch to be portrayed by cast member Dan Castellaneta , the voice of Homer among other characters in the series . However , after a while , the writers decided to ask if Murdoch would guest @-@ star as himself . Scully comments that the writers were " impressed " that Murdoch would introduce himself as a " billionaire tyrant " in the episode .

The episode pokes fun at the dwindling popularity of Bill Clinton 's presidency at the time . In their list 15 Simpsons Moments That Perfectly Captured Their Eras , Genevieve Koski , Josh Modell , Noel Murray , Sean O 'Neal , Kyle Ryan , and Scott Tobias of The A.V. Club wrote " By the time this episode aired [...] , the nation had endured more than a year of the Lewinsky scandal . The episode debuted a month after the House impeached Clinton , but less than two weeks before the Senate 's impeach / acquit vote , so an air of uncertainty lingered over an otherwise lightweight episode about Homer organizing a Super Bowl trip . " In a scene in the episode , Clinton calls to congratulate the Super Bowl victors from the Oval Office , but is distracted by Al Gore measuring a window . As Scully recalls , at the time , the Simpsons writers were confident Gore would win the 2000 presidential election , which eventually was marginally , and controversially , won by George W. Bush .

The episode also comments on the series ' fanbase . Near the end of the episode , Madden and Summerall provide the following analysis :

In his book Leaving Springfield , John Alberti writes about the exchange : " This conversation begins with conventional football game patter used to comment on the episode , but then takes an abrupt turn when Madden realizes , in spite of the humor , that the episode did not live up to expectations (which he has not originally noticed) . "

The episode title is a reference to the film Sunday Bloody Sunday (1971) , and perhaps the U2 song of the same name . The couch gag is a reference to James Cameron 's 1997 film Titanic . The beginning of the episode shows Bart 's grade visiting a post office . Their tour guide is modeled after American actor and folk singer Burl Ives , whom director Moore is a fan of . " Vincent Price 's Egg Magic " is a parody on celebrity @-@ endorsed craft kits which were popular during the 1960s and which , according to Meyer , do not exist anymore . The decision to have Price endorse an egg crafts product is based on Price 's role as Egghead in the 1960s ' series Batman . The sequence featuring a man called Rudy being refused entry to the group 's bus because he is " too small to go to the Super Bowl " is a reference to the 1993 film Rudy about football player Rudy Ruettiger . Dolly Parton says she will be joined by actor Rob Lowe and dance group Stomp for her performance during the Super Bowl halftime show , while the Super Bowl features a booth called " Take a Leak with NFL Greats " ; the players shown participating are Ricky Watters and Jim Plunkett .

= = Release and reception = =

= = = Broadcast and re @-@ releases = = =

In its original American broadcast on January 31 , 1999 , " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " received an 11 @.@ 6 rating , meaning it was seen by approximately 11 @.@ 5 million viewers . It finished in 10th place in the ratings for the week of January 25 ? 31 , 1999 , making it the second most watched scripted program on Fox , after the premiere of Family Guy . On September 14 , 2004 , " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " , along with the season 1 episode " Homer 's Night Out " , the season 11 episode " The Mansion Family " and the season 13 episode " Homer the Moe " , were released on a DVD set called The Simpsons ? Gone Wild . On August 7 , 2007 , " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " was again released as part of The Simpsons ? The Complete Tenth Season DVD box set . Matt Groening , Mike Scully , George Meyer , Tom Martin , Matt Selman and Steven Dean Moore participated in the DVD 's audio commentary of the episode .

== = Controversy == =

== = = Background == = =

The beginning of the episode 's third act shows Marge and Lisa watching a Super Bowl commercial . In his book *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* , Mark I. Pinsky described the commercial :

The scene was inspired by real @-@ life Super Bowl commercials in which , according to Scully , " you don 't know what the product is " because there is " so much going on " in Super Bowl commercials . It was also based on the music video for the American rock band ZZ Top 's 1983 song " Legs " . Although they had come up with the commercial 's premise , they were not sure of what its tagline would be . Eventually , Martin , one of the episode writers , suggested " The Catholic Church ... we 've made a few changes . " It got the biggest laugh from the other writers and was subsequently included in the episode .

The scene garnered scrutiny from members of The Catholic League , a self @-@ appointed organization that is not , despite its name , affiliated with the Catholic Church . The league had criticized The Simpsons ' depiction of Catholicism before , namely in the episode " Lisa Gets an " A " " , which aired the year before . The scene included an exchange between Bart and Marge that the League felt was hurtful to Catholics . William A. Donohue , the president of the league , wrote Fox a letter asking them to explain why the dialogue was in the show . After failing to receive an answer several times , Donohue was at last given a reply written by Thomas Chavez , manager for broadcast standards and practices . The league were not satisfied with Chavez ' answer . After " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " aired , the Catholic League issued an article in their news magazine *Catalyst* . In it , they mentioned the scene in " Lisa Gets an " A " " , and wrote that The Simpsons had " struck again , big time " with the Super Bowl commercial in " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " . They wrote that they had sent a complaint to Chavez regarding the scene , and encouraged others to do the same ; " We wrote to Mr. Chavez again , but we also told him that he ? d be hearing from you , too . So don 't disappoint us . "

== = = Censorship == = =

Following the episode 's broadcast , the Fox network received several angry letters and emails from concerned Catholics , who were uneasy with the commercial scene . According to Scully , the letters were worded the same , and all started with " My family and I have always enjoyed The Simpsons , until last night ... " Nevertheless , the letters provoked a reaction from The Simpsons staff , and in an interview , Scully said , " We got a couple of hundred letters , and it was very obvious from reading a majority of them that [the Catholic letter writers] had not seen the show . Some of them were from third @-@ graders , all saying the same thing : ' Please don 't make fun of my religion . ' Which we all know third @-@ graders are very adamant about . "

Several months later , the Catholic League contacted Fox again , asking that the word " Catholic " be excised from the voice @-@ over when the episode repeated in September 1999 on the network , as well as in its subsequent syndicated airings . The network agreed , and Roland MacFarland , Fox 's vice president of broadcast standards , ordered Scully to cut the word from the episode or eliminate all reference to religion . Scully refused , and after a long argument , MacFarland offered to replace the protesting denomination with a Protestant substitute ? Methodist , Presbyterians or Baptists . Scully then asked MacFarland " What would be the difference changing it to another religion , and wouldn 't that just be offending a different group of people ? " , to which MacFarland replied that Fox had already had trouble with the Catholics earlier that season .

Following the complaints , Fox removed any mention of Catholicism from the scene , resulting in the line " The church ... " Scully was reportedly furious with Fox 's actions . In an interview in *Los Angeles Times* , Scully said , " people can say hurtful things to each other about their weight , their race , their intelligence , their sexual preference , and that all seems up for grabs , but when you get into religion , some people get very nervous . " Marisa Guthrie of *Boston Herald* also criticized the

network , describing it as " caving in " to the Catholic League 's protests . She wrote , " Hollywood has always been gun shy of controversy , but recent displays of self @-@ censorship on the part of entertainment industry executives make us cringe [...] Granted Catholics , as a group have endured an ample amount of bashing , but The Simpsons is an equal opportunity offender . " Howard Rosenberg , a writer for the Los Angeles Times , criticized Fox 's actions as well . He argued that the network had a biased opinion towards Catholicism and that , had the scene mentioned a different religion , it would have been accepted . He also wrote , " Given its famous flaunting of sleaze and death @-@ defying motorcycle leaps , the big news here is that Fox has standards . Its latest production is Censors Who Kill Jokes . "

In an issue of Catalyst , the Catholic League responded to Rosenberg 's article . They argued that Rosenberg was biased against Catholics , in that he was content with the series lampooning Catholicism , but not other religions . They wrote , " all along we have been told by Fox that none of our complaints were valid because none of the material was truly offensive . But now we have a Fox executive producer disingenuously giving away his hand by protesting why it should be okay to offend another group of people with the same material he initially said wasn ' t offensive to Catholics ! And isn ' t it striking that Rosenberg is upset with the fact that the double standard ? which now , for the first time works positively for Catholics ? is a real problem . Never do we remember Rosenberg protesting the double standard that allows ' artists ' to dump on Catholics while protecting most other segments of society from their assaults . " The League also complimented the members ' participation , writing , " It only goes to prove what can be done when Catholics get actively involved . "

The controversy surrounding the scene has since been referenced in later episodes of the series . While the censored version of " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " is still in syndication , it was left uncensored on its release on The Simpsons ? The Complete Tenth Season DVD box set .

= = = Critical reviews = = =

Following its broadcast , " Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " received mostly positive reviews from critics . In his review of the The Simpsons ? Gone Wild DVD set , David Packard of DVD Verdict wrote : " This episode has always been one of my favorites , and while the following episode [" The Mansion Family "] is a nice inclusion as well , this episode is the best on the disc . The hilarious gags come at a slam @-@ bang pace , and they 're occasionally edgy . " He especially liked the set @-@ piece in the post office , as well as the Super Bowl commercial . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood of I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide called the episode " A thoroughly enjoyable romp through what happens when a bunch of lads go for a Sunday out at the ball game . " They enjoyed the guest @-@ stars , writing " both Dolly Parton and , bizarrely , Rupert Murdoch ? spice things up nicely " , however they were most fond of Fred Willard as Wally Kogen . " A shame he doesn 't join our regulars " , they wrote . James Plath of DVD Town wrote that the episode is " funny , " and Ian Jane of DVD Talk found the episode " amusing " . The Orlando Sentinel 's Gregory Hardy named it the third best episode of the show with a sports theme . Phillip Stephenson of Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette called the episode " classic " , and Susan Dunne of The Hartford Courant described it as " debauched but hilarious " . The Cincinnati Post 's Greg Paeth noted that the episode is a critical favorite .

On the other hand , Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide gave the episode a more mixed review . He wrote : " Like most guest star @-@ ridden episodes , this one gets a bit gimmicky to fit in all the cameos . " He found the self @-@ referential ending " fails to become clever and instead just seems silly . " However , he wrote that the episode " includes a few goods bits , especially the phone call in which Homer convinces Lenny to go to the game . " Jake McNeill of Digital Entertainment News wrote that the episode is " so jam @-@ packed with guest celebrity voices that they ran out of room for a plot . Or humor . " Chris Barsanti of Filmcritic.com gave a negative review as well , and wrote that the episode is " lost amid a flurry of celebrity walk @-@ ons and lazy jokes . "