

= Sideshow Bob Roberts =

" Sideshow Bob Roberts " is the fifth episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 9 , 1994 . Kelsey Grammer returns as villain Sideshow Bob , who , in this episode , wins the Springfield mayoral election through electoral fraud . The episode was written by Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein , and directed by Mark Kirkland . Oakley and Weinstein drew inspiration for the episode from the Watergate scandal , and included many cultural references to political films , as well as real @-@ life events . These included the film All the President 's Men and the first televised debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy during the 1960 United States presidential election .

The episode received favorable reception in the media , including a positive mention in I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide and Green Bay Press @-@ Gazette . A review in Press & Sun @-@ Bulletin placed the episode as the seventh best of the series .

= = Plot = =

In Springfield Prison , Sideshow Bob calls local right @-@ wing talk show host Birch Barlow and complains about being unfairly imprisoned . Barlow and Springfield 's residents pressure Mayor Quimby into releasing Bob . Bob is soon unveiled as the Republican candidate for the Springfield mayoral election . Determined to keep Bob from becoming mayor , Bart and Lisa decide to campaign for Quimby . Unfortunately , due to Bob 's charisma and Quimby 's drowsy , overmedicated appearance at a televised debate , Bob wins the election by a massive margin . Among those voting for Bob are Krusty , who , though Bob framed him for armed robbery , " is aching for that upper @-@ class tax break " he has promised , and Homer , who disagrees with Bob 's " Bart @-@ killing policy " but does approve of his " Selma @-@ killing policy . "

The Simpsons awake to find that their house is in the way of Bob 's new " Matlock Expressway " and that it will soon be demolished , which will leave the Simpsons homeless . Principal Skinner who was excited by Bob 's elections , happily demotes Bart to kindergarten at Springfield Elementary School . Bart and Lisa begin to suspect that Bob somehow rigged the election . Lisa goes through the voting records but is unable to find any proof that the election was rigged . Lisa receives a message from a whistleblower to meet at night in an underground parking garage , who turns out to be Waylon Smithers , after Homer unintentionally exposes him from the cover of darkness due to his car lights . Bob 's policies disagree with Smithers ' " choice of lifestyle , " so he tells Bart and Lisa to find a voter named Edgar Neubauer , who will lead them to evidence of electoral fraud .

Eventually , Bart discovers the name Edgar Neubauer on a tombstone at the cemetery . After he explains this to Lisa , she discovers that many of those listed as voting for Bob are in fact long dead , including her former cat , Snowball I , making Lisa angry and makes her bring on her A game . At the trial that follows after Bart and Lisa reveal their story to the public , they trick Bob into confessing his crime by accusing him of being Barlow 's political puppet (causing Bob to become annoyed) resulting in Bob blurting out that he was indeed the mastermind , saying that he would never need help to rig an election . He then reveals that he did this because of what he perceives as the town 's stupidity at voting for Quimby , the Democrat , whereas Bob claims they really desire and need " a cold @-@ hearted Republican to cut [their] taxes , brutalize criminals , and rule [them] like a king . " The court then strips Bob of his position and sends him back to prison . The Simpsons get their house back , Quimby regains his job as mayor , Bart returns to the fourth grade , and the " Matlock Expressway " is put on hold . Bob vows revenge from his minimum security prison , though he quickly finds a new goal to be accomplished : helping the Yale alumni inmates beat the Princeton alumni at rowing .

= = Production = =

Although the episode primarily mocks the Republican Party , the writers included several jokes at

the expense of the Democratic Party , liberal and conservative politics , to try to be as neutral as possible . Writers Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein were very interested in the Watergate scandal and based a lot of the second act on that . Mark Kirkland directed the episode .

The episode sees Kelsey Grammer return as Sideshow Bob for his fourth appearance . Clips from previous episodes featuring Bob were used to remind viewers who he was and what he had done . Bob 's Cape Fear musical cue from the episode " Cape Feare " is also reused . Showrunner David Mirkin found directing Grammer " a joy " . Dr. Demento also guest @-@ starred , as did Larry King for the second time , while Henry Corden voices Fred Flintstone . One of the prisoners in Bob 's campaign advert is a caricature of producer Richard Sakai . The " Les Wynan " joke was pitched by Mike Reiss . The episode does not feature a chalkboard or couch gag , cutting straight from the clouds to the TV . Some syndication edits have included a couch gag .

The episode contains the first use of the word " meh " in the show . The word , which was later included in the Collins English Dictionary , is credited as being popularized by the show , principally following its usage in the season twelve episode " Hungry , Hungry Homer " . In " Sideshow Bob Roberts " , the word is used by the librarian who provides Lisa with the town 's voting records , in response to her questioning their unclassified nature .

= = Cultural references = =

Much of the episode is based on the Watergate scandal , as well as other real @-@ life political events . The two Republicans who follow Bob around were based on H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman , two of Richard Nixon 's closest advisors during Watergate . Sideshow Bob 's campaign advert was based on the famous Willie Horton and Revolving Door political advertisements used by George H.W. Bush during the 1988 United States presidential election . Birch Barlow 's question to Mayor Quimby about whether his stance on crime would differ if it was his family being attacked is a reference to Bernard Shaw 's similar question to Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis during the 1988 presidential debates . Quimby 's appearance during the debate parodies Richard Nixon 's appearance during his first televised debate with John F. Kennedy during the 1960 presidential election . Nixon had recently recovered from a cold , and sweated considerably throughout , something that was detrimental to the impression he made in the debate .

Many political films are also referenced . The episode features several references to the film All the President 's Men , which chronicled Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein 's investigation of the Watergate scandal . These include the pull @-@ out of Lisa looking over the voting records , the music , and the clandestine meeting with Smithers in a parking garage . The end court scene , as well as Sideshow Bob 's speech , echo the 1992 film A Few Good Men , including Jack Nicholson 's speech with the line " You can 't handle the truth " . Bob 's sudden confession that he did rig the election was a vague reference to " every episode of Perry Mason " . Sideshow Bob gives his acceptance speech underneath a giant poster with a picture of himself on it ; this is a reference to the campaign speech scene in Citizen Kane . The title and several plot elements , including Bob entering Burns ' meeting draped in an American flag , are references to the 1992 film Bob Roberts .

The character Birch Barlow is a take @-@ off of American talk show host and political commentator Rush Limbaugh . Barlow mentions Colonel Oliver North , Officer Stacey Koon and advertising mascot Joe Camel as being " intelligent conservative [s] , railroaded by our liberal justice system " . Also , the language spoken at Republican Party headquarters is inspired by Enochian , a language associated with occult and Satanic ceremonies .

The Springfield Minimum Security Prison is a parody of Allenwood Minimum Security Prison . When Lisa drives , she is listening to " St. Elmo 's Fire " by John Parr , a choice David Mirkin found " very sad " . Archie Comics characters Archie Andrews , Reggie Mantle , Moose Mason and Jughead Jones are shown throwing Homer on the Simpsons ' lawn and warning him to " stay out of Riverdale ! " Some of the deceased voters are Buddy Holly , Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper , who all died in a plane crash on February 3 , 1959 . The epitaph on The Big Bopper 's gravestone is " Gooooodbye , Baby ! " a reference to the opening line of his song " Chantilly Lace " - " Hellooo Baby ! " . Finally , the Simpsons ' home being demolished to make way for a bypass is a very slight

reference to the opening of The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy .

= = Themes and analysis = =

David L.G. Arnold comments in the book Leaving Springfield that the episode is a satire on " society 's lazy , uninformed attitude about the electoral process , " as well as " a comment on the role in society of a cadre of elites (the Republican party) who see themselves as naturally suited to lead . " The episode also portrays Republicans as willing to break the law in order to achieve this ; in this case , Bob commits electoral fraud . This is most displayed in Bob 's line : " Your guilty conscience may force you to vote Democratic , but deep down inside you secretly long for a cold @-@ hearted Republican to lower taxes , brutalize criminals , and rule you like a king . That 's why I did this : to protect you from yourselves . "

Matthew Henry writes in the same book that the episode " well illustrates the battle of [political] ideologies ? and its engagement with the politics of sexuality . " He refers to the scene where Smithers intimates that Bob rigged the election ; his motivation for whistleblowing is Bob 's conservative policies , which disagree with his " choice of lifestyle " , namely his homosexuality . Henry concludes the scene shows that conservative politics and homosexuality " cannot coexist " and that the scene marks the point where Smithers ' sexuality became " public and overtly political . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Sideshow Bob Roberts " finished tied for 64th place in the weekly ratings for the week of October 3 to October 9 , 1994 with a Nielsen rating of 8 @.@ 6 . It was the sixth highest rated show on Fox that week .

Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide noted the episode was : " A stunningly outspoken political satire that drew considerable disapproval from the Republican Party when it was aired . " Eric Reinagel , Brian Moritz and John Hill of the Press & Sun @-@ Bulletin named " Sideshow Bob Roberts " as the seventh best episode of the show . Thomas Rozwadowski of Green Bay Press @-@ Gazette placed the episode among his list of the ten best episodes of the show which have lessons : " Corrupt politicians always get their comeuppance . Or not . " He also highlighted Bob 's campaign advert and Kent Brockman 's line : " And the results are in . For Sideshow Bob , 100 percent . For Joe Quimby , 1 percent . And we remind you , there is a 1 percent margin of error . "

The episode has been used in a course at Columbia College Chicago . The course titled " The Simpsons as Satirical Authors " featured " Sideshow Bob Roberts " as one of the episodes used screened for the " What 's (Not) Wrong with America ? Critiquing the U.S. Government " topic .