

= Itchy & Scratchy & Marge =

" Itchy & Scratchy & Marge " is the ninth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 20 , 1990 . In the episode , which is a satire of censorship issues , Maggie attacks Homer with a mallet and Marge blames The Itchy & Scratchy Show for Maggie 's actions . It was written by John Swartzwelder and was the first episode to be directed by Jim Reardon . Alex Rocco makes his first of three guest appearances as Roger Meyers , Jr .

= = Plot = =

Homer clumsily attempts to build Marge a spice rack . While he is doing so , Maggie sneaks up behind Homer and hits him on the head with a mallet , similar to the famed stabbing scene in the movie Psycho . Marge is initially clueless as to what would motivate Maggie to do such a deed , but then notices that , when Maggie sees an episode of The Itchy & Scratchy Show , a cartoon which is known for its violence , she mimics its content . As a result , Marge immediately blames the makers of the show for Maggie 's actions and bans Bart and Lisa from watching the show , but the two still manage to watch Itchy & Scratchy at their friends ' houses . Marge writes a letter to the producers of the show asking them to tone down their violence , but in response , Roger Meyers , Jr . ? the chairman of Itchy & Scratchy International ? writes a letter to Marge , telling her one @-@ person can not make a difference and calls her a " screwball " . In response , Marge decides to " show what one screwball can do " .

Marge forms " Springfieldians for Nonviolence , Understanding , and Helping " (SNUH as acronym) , and forces the family to picket outside the Itchy & Scratchy Studios . Marge 's protest gains momentum and soon more people join the group and even start to picket The Krusty the Clown Show , on which Itchy & Scratchy is shown . Marge appears on Kent Brockman 's show , Smartline where she confronts Roger Meyers over the violence and suggests that concerned parents send letters to Meyers . Many angry letters are sent to the Studio and Roger Meyers concedes defeat , and agrees to eliminate violence in Itchy & Scratchy . Eventually , a new short in which Itchy & Scratchy sit on a porch drinking lemonade airs , but Bart , Lisa , and other kids across Springfield reject the cleaned @-@ up show . A lengthy montage follows , in which the children of Springfield go outside and engage in various wholesome activities and that night Bart and Lisa brag about their various outdoor activities while Marge listens happily .

Meanwhile , Michelangelo 's David goes on a coast @-@ to @-@ coast tour of the United States , and Springfield is one of its scheduled destinations . The members of SNUH try to urge Marge to protest the sculpture , insisting that it is offensive and unsuitable . However , Marge , being an artist herself , reveals that she believes that the sculpture is a masterpiece . While appearing on Smartline , Marge admits that it is wrong to censor one form of art but not another , and sadly concludes that while one person can make a difference , at the end of the day they probably should not . Freed from public protest , Itchy & Scratchy immediately returns to its old form and Springfield 's children abandon their wholesome activities and return to spending every day indoors watching the violent Itchy & Scratchy cartoons . Homer and Marge go to see David and Marge expresses her disappointment that the kids are at home watching " a cat and mouse disembowel each other " rather than seeing the sculpture . She cheers up when Homer tells her that the school will be forcing them to see the sculpture on a school trip .

= = Production = =

" Itchy & Scratchy & Marge " is an acclaimed episode which dealt with censorship issues and allowed the writers to have a lot of Itchy & Scratchy cartoons , which many fans had been clamoring for . The episode was written by John Swartzwelder , who loved Itchy & Scratchy and wrote several episodes that have them at the center . The episode was partially inspired by Terry Rakolta , who protested the Fox network over the show Married ... with Children . For the episode , which handles

a large issue , the writers tried not to have a point of view and looked at both sides , despite what the writers personally felt . During the original airing of the episode , the Fox satellite blew out and the entire West coast of the United States missed the first act of the episode .

This was the first episode directed by Jim Reardon , who had previously made a student film called " Bring Me the Head of Charlie Brown " which was very violent and the experience served him well for this episode . There are several characters who work at I & S studios who are caricatures of real people : the cartoonist who draws the Marge / Squirrel is based on Eddie Fitzgerald , who worked at Filmation and the three people with Meyers when he is asking Marge for suggestions are caricatures of Rich Moore , David Silverman and Wes Archer .

Alex Rocco makes his first of three appearances as Roger Meyers . Many people behind The Simpsons were huge fans of The Godfather and Jim Reardon looked for a way to shoot him in the eye as a reference to Rocco 's character , Moe Greene .

The long montage of the Kids of Springfield playing was directed by Bob Anderson and is making a satirical point by saying the opposite of what the writers believed . The segment was written by John Swartzwelder and the idea of using Beethoven 's 6th Symphony was in the original script . James L. Brooks had wanted the episode to end with the montage , but the writers disagreed . Roger Meyers , Jr. makes his first appearance in this episode , as does Sideshow Mel , although he does not have any lines until the later episode " Black Widower " .

= = Cultural references = =

The scene where Maggie hits Homer over the head with a mallet is an extensive parody of the shower scene from Psycho , in which the music and camera angles are almost identical . The music heard while the children play outside is the first movement of Beethoven 's Pastoral Symphony , and is similar to a segment of the Disney film Fantasia .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Itchy & Scratchy & Marge " was watched by 22 @. @ 2 million viewers , finishing 34th in ratings for the week of December 17 ? 23 , 1990 with a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 9 . It was the highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network that week , beating Married ... with Children . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide praised the episode , stating that " Homer 's doomed attempt to build a spice rack is only the start of another great episode , which works as a superb debate about television violence and politically inspired censorship . " As well as noting that " the ending is especially poignant , as the pedagogues of Springfield swoop on Michelangelo 's David as an example of filth and degradation " . Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club praised the episode for its satire . He wrote , " [The episode] contains one of my favorite sequences not just in The Simpsons but in television as a whole . In it , a censorship @- @ happy Marge has neutered Itchy & Scratchy to the point where the children of Springfield are moved to do the unthinkable : stop watching television . [...] A dystopia instantly becomes a small @- @ town paradise , a happy realm of frolicking children and sunny innocence as kids wake up from a TV fog and embrace life 's rich pageantry . It ? s a lovely , lyrical , even beautiful sequence even if it ? s light on gags . It presents , then ruthlessly yanks back , an alternate universe Springfield ruled by dewy innocence rather than greed and mob mentality . " He also felt that the episode " got to make a relevant point in line with writer John Swartzwelder ? s libertarianism without sacrificing the momentum of the episode or losing track of the characters and turning them into mere sounding boards for their creator ? s beliefs . "

Empire named the Psycho parody as the second best film parody in the show . " The best throwaway gags blindside the unsuspecting viewer in episodes that are nominally about something else [...] Hitchcock is ripped off more than any other director but this is the most lovingly rendered reference . " The Psycho parody was named the 22nd greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .