

= Saddlesore Galactica =

" Saddlesore Galactica " is the thirteenth episode of the eleventh season of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 6 , 2000 . In the episode , the Simpson family rescues a diving horse named Duncan from the abuse of his owner and keeps him as a pet . When the cost of keeping Duncan rises , Homer and Bart train him to be a racehorse . Duncan wins several races and , as a result , Homer is threatened with death by a group of jockeys . Meanwhile , Lisa is upset over her school unfairly losing the musical band competition at a state fair and writes a letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton in protest .

The episode features several guest appearances ; horse race caller Trevor Denman stars as himself , commentating the races in the episode , and voice artist Jim Cummings provides the animal sounds made by Duncan . Randy Bachman and Fred Turner appear as themselves as their rock band Bachman ? Turner Overdrive performs at the state fair . " Saddlesore Galactica " was written by Tim Long and directed by Lance Kramer . A number of meta @-@ references are included in the episode , such as the character Comic Book Guy telling the Simpsons that they have owned a horse before in the episode " Lisa 's Pony " .

Around 9 @.@ 6 million American homes tuned in to watch the episode during its original airing . In 2008 , it was released on DVD , along with the rest of the episodes of the eleventh season . " Saddlesore Galactica " is despised by many television critics and fans according to Long . It has been described by About.com 's Nancy Basile as one of the season 's worst episodes , by Marco Ursi of Maclean 's as the worst episode of the series , and has frequently been cited by fans as an example of the show jumping the shark . Criticism has been directed at its outlandish plot , which , among other things , features elf @-@ like jockeys who lure Homer into their secret lair where they threaten him to stop Duncan from winning .

= = Plot = =

Lisa and the other members of Springfield Elementary 's school band enter a music competition together at a state fair , performing James Brown 's " Living in America " . However , they lose to the Ogdenville Elementary band , which performs John Philip Sousa 's " Stars and Stripes Forever " and uses red , white , and blue glowsticks to form a flag . Lisa accuses Ogdenville of cheating as the use of visual aids is against the rules of the competition . She later writes a letter to President Clinton , complaining about the situation . At the fair , Homer and Bart see a horse named Duncan that can dive into pools . The Simpsons take Duncan home after his sleazy owner is accused of animal cruelty and flees . However , they end up having financial issues because of Duncan ; it costs them US \$ 500 a week to keep him .

Homer and Bart try to think of a way that Duncan can make money to help offset the costs of keeping him . Bart discovers that Duncan is a fast runner and suggests that he should be a racehorse . Homer enters Duncan at the Springfield Downs race track , with Bart as the jockey . However , a frightened Duncan loses his first race as he refuses to leave the stall until all other horses have finished . Homer and Bart find a strategy for Duncan to win by turning him into a frightening horse named " Furious D " , complete with dyed hair and one of Lisa 's bracelets for a nose ring . He intimidates the other horses and wins several races . Homer is soon invited by the losing jockeys to have a beer in their lounge , which turns out to be a secret lair . The jockeys reveal themselves to be murderous elf @-@ like creatures who want Homer to have Duncan lose the upcoming race . They threaten to eat Homer 's brain if he does not comply . Though intimidated at first , Homer later vows to deal with those " murderous trolls " .

At the Springfield Derby , Duncan wins the race , and the furious jockeys chase after Homer and Bart . With the help of Marge and Lisa , who spray water on the jockeys with a hose , Homer is able to put the jockeys into a garbage bag and get them sent to the dump . Afterwards , Homer and Bart prepare for Duncan 's retirement from racing to start a new life as a stud . President Clinton then shows up at the Simpsons 's house to see Lisa , presenting her with a plaque . Clinton says that Ogdenville was wrong to use glowsticks and that Springfield Elementary 's band is the true

champion .

= = Production = =

" Saddlesore Galactica " was written by Tim Long and directed by Lance Kramer as part of the eleventh season of The Simpsons (1999 ? 2000) . The title is a reference to the science fiction television series Battlestar Galactica . The idea of Duncan originally being a diving horse was inspired by an actual diving horse that used to jump into a pool at Steel Pier in Atlantic City , New Jersey at the beginning of the 20th century ; a postcard showing this horse was used as a reference by the animators for the scenes featuring the diving . When the animation process began , Kramer drew instructions to his animators on how horses move when they run and how their ankles work . He has said that because Duncan was a large part of the story , " we wanted him to have somewhat of a personality . So when everybody knew how to draw the horse and we got that out of the way , they could animate the horse acting . " Voice artist Jim Cummings provided the animal sounds made by Duncan in the episode .

American horse race caller Trevor Denman guest starred in the episode as himself , commentating on Duncan 's races over the public @-@ address system . Randy Bachman and Fred Turner , known for their rock band Bachman ? Turner Overdrive , made an appearance in the episode as themselves . They perform on stage at the state fair during the beginning of the episode . When Bachman and Turner tell the audience that they are going to play some songs from their new album , Homer immediately yells out demands for them to play their old song " Takin ' Care of Business " . The band starts the song and Homer then yells , " Get to the ' workin overtime ' part ! " The band obliges , skipping straight to the chorus . Bachman had left the band when " Saddlesore Galactica " was recorded and because of tension between him and Turner , the two recorded their lines separately on different occasions . Long has said that the Simpsons staff members " were thrilled to have [them] on the show " and that the pair " could not have been nicer . "

= = Meta @-@ references = =

The episode is heavily self @-@ referential and contains a number of meta @-@ references . When the Simpsons take Duncan home from the fair , Comic Book Guy points out to the Simpsons that they have already taken in a horse as a pet (as seen in " Lisa 's Pony ") , and that " the expense forced Homer to work at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , with hilarious consequences . " In another scene later in the episode , when Lisa points out to Marge that Marge is showing signs of gambling problems , Comic Book Guy shows up again wearing a T @-@ shirt that says " Worst Episode Ever " and tells Lisa : " Hey , I 'm watching you ! " This refers to the fact that Marge 's gambling problems have already been explored in the episode " \$ pringfield " .

Jonathan Gray analyzed the self @-@ referentiality in The Simpsons in his 2006 book Watching with The Simpsons : Television , Parody , and Intertextuality , writing that " Sitcoms constantly ' reset ' themselves , living in [...] an ' existential circle ' in which nothing really changes , and every episode starts more or less where the last one started ; and The Simpsons frequently plays with this sitcom clock , and with the amnesia of sitcom memory . The family members often forget important events in their ' history ' [...] " . Gray noted that in " Saddlesore Galactica " , " the action continues as normal , as sitcom memory (or lack thereof) is pointed out but comically not acted upon . Thus , where David Grote [author of The End of Comedy : The Sit @-@ Com and the Comedic Tradition] (1983 : 67) notes that sitcom episodes ' live in a kind of time @-@ warp without any reference to the other episodes , ' producing a situation whereby everything ' remains inviolate and undisturbed , no matter what transitory events may occur ' (1983 : 59) , The Simpsons comically reflects upon this . "

= = Reception = =

The episode originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 6 , 2000 . It was

viewed in approximately 9 @. @ 6 million households that night . With a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 5 , " Saddlesore Galactica " finished 29th in the ratings for the week of January 31 ? February 6 , 2000 . It was the second highest @-@ rated broadcast on Fox that week , following an episode of Malcolm in the Middle . On October 7 , 2008 , " Saddlesore Galactica " was released on DVD as part of the box set The Simpsons ? The Complete Eleventh Season . Staff members Tim Long , Lance Kramer , Mike Scully , Matt Groening , George Meyer , Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , Matt Selmán , and Tom Martin participated in the DVD audio commentary for the episode . Deleted scenes from the episode were also included on the box set .

According to Long , " Saddlesore Galactica " is considered by many critics and fans as one of the worst episodes in the history of the show , particularly for the scenes featuring the jockey elves . In 2007 , Maclean 's writer Marco Ursi named it his least favorite episode of The Simpsons , elaborating : " This is the one where the Simpsons get a horse ? again ? and the plot devolves into something involving the secret land of the jockeys . Making meta @-@ references to the fact you ? ve just made your ' worst episode ever ' doesn ? t make it any funnier . " Nancy Basile of About.com listed the episode as one of the worst episodes of the season ? one of the episodes that made her " cringe because they included blatant gimmicks and outlandish plots " .

Despite its criticisms , " Saddlesore Galactica " received some positive reviews . While reviewing the eleventh season of The Simpsons , DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson commented on the episode , writing : " I remember that ' Saddlesore ' was much despised when it first aired , though I can ? t recall if I joined that chorus as well . Maybe the many iffy episodes since early 2000 have made it look better , but I think that ' Saddlesore ' offers a decent number of laughs . It goes off onto some dopey tangents and displays an unnerving tendency toward self @-@ awareness , but it provides reasonable entertainment . " DVD Talk 's Ian Jane described the cameo appearance by Bachman and Turner as " fun " .