

= Space Pilot 3000 =

" Space Pilot 3000 " is the pilot episode of Futurama . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 28 , 1999 . It is also the first episode to be set in the 30th century as the third season and beyond are set in the 31st century . The episode focuses on the cryogenic freezing of the series protagonist , Philip J. Fry , and the events when he awakens 1 @,@ 000 years in the future . Series regulars are introduced and the futuristic setting , inspired by a variety of classic science fiction series from The Jetsons to Star Trek , is revealed . It also sets the stage for many of the events to follow in the series , foreshadowing plot points from the third and fourth seasons .

The episode was written by David X. Cohen and Matt Groening , and directed by Rich Moore and Gregg Vanzo . Dick Clark and Leonard Nimoy guest starred as themselves . The episode generally received good reviews with many reviewers noting that while the episode started slow the series merited further viewing .

= = Plot = =

On December 31 , 1999 , a pizza delivery boy named Philip J. Fry delivers a pizza to " Applied Cryogenics " in New York City only to discover that the order was actually a prank call . Dejected and demoralized , he stops in the deserted lab to eat the pizza while outside the whole world is getting ready to celebrate the beginning of New Year . At midnight , Fry falls into an open cryonic tube and is frozen as it immediately activates . He is defrosted on Tuesday , December 31 , 2999 , in what is now New New York City . He is taken to a fate assignment officer named Leela , a purple @-@ haired cyclops . To his misfortune , Fry is assigned the computer @-@ determined permanent career of delivery boy , and flees into the city when Leela tries to implant Fry 's career chip designating his job .

While trying to track down his only living relative , Professor Farnsworth , Fry befriends a suicidal robot named Bender . As they talk at a bar , Fry learns that Bender too has deserted his job of bending girders for suicide booths . Together , they evade Leela and hide in the Head Museum , where they encounter the preserved heads of historical figures . Fry and Bender eventually find themselves underground in the ruins of Old New York .

Leela finally catches Fry , who has become depressed that everyone that he knew and loved is dead and tells her that he will accept his career as a delivery boy . Leela sympathizes with Fry ? she too is alone , and hates her job ? so she quits and joins Fry and Bender as job deserters . The three track down Professor Farnsworth , founder of an intergalactic delivery company called Planet Express . With the help of Professor Farnsworth , the three evade the police by launching the Planet Express Ship at the stroke of midnight amid the New Year 's fireworks . As the year 3000 begins , Farnsworth hires the three as the crew of his ship . Fry inquires at what his job is , and learns that he will be a delivery boy . Fry , ironically , cheers at his new job .

= = Continuity = =

While the plot of the episode stands on its own , it also sets up much of the continuing plot of the series by including Easter eggs for events that do not occur until much later : as Fry falls into the freezer , the scene shows a strange shadow cast on the wall behind him . It is revealed in " The Why of Fry " that the shadow belongs to Nibbler , who intentionally pushes Fry into the freezer as part of a complex plan to save Earth from the Brainspawn in the future . Executive producer David X. Cohen claims that from the very beginning the creators had plans to show a larger conspiracy behind Fry 's journey to the future . In the movie Futurama : Bender 's Big Score , it is revealed that the spacecraft seen destroying the city while Fry is frozen are piloted by Bender and those chasing him after he steals the Nobel Peace Prize .

At the end of the episode , Professor Farnsworth offers Fry , Leela and Bender the Planet Express delivery crew positions . The professor produces the previous crew 's career chips from an envelope labeled " Contents of Space Wasp 's Stomach " . In a later episode , " The Sting " , the crew

encounters the ship of the previous crew in a space beehive . When discussing this discontinuity in the episode commentary , writer of " The Sting " Patric Verrone states " we made liars out of the pilot " .

This episode introduces the fictional technology that allows preserved heads to be kept alive in jars . This technology makes it possible for the characters to interact with celebrities from the then @-@ distant past , and is used by the writers to comment on the 20th and 21st centuries in a satirical manner .

= = Production = =

In the DVD commentary , Matt Groening notes that beginning any television series is difficult , but he found particular difficulty starting one that took place in the future because of the amount of setup required . As a trade off , they included a lot of Easter eggs in the episode that would pay off in later episodes . He and Cohen point these out throughout the episode . The scene where Fry emerges from a cryonic tube and has his first view of New New York was the first 3D scene worked on by the animation team . It was considered to be a defining point for whether the technique would work or not .

Originally , the first person entering the pneumatic tube transport system declared " J.F.K. , Jr . Airport " as his destination . After John F. Kennedy , Jr . ' s death in the crash of his private airplane , the line has since been redubbed on all subsequent broadcasts and the DVD release to " Radio City Mutant Hall " (a reference to Radio City Music Hall) . The original version was heard only during the pilot broadcast and the first rerun a few months later . Although the original line is still used on repeat broadcasts in the UK on Satellite channel Sky One . (The Region 2 DVD has the redubbed line) . According to Groening , the inspiration for the suicide booth was the 1937 Donald Duck cartoon , " Modern Inventions " , in which the Duck is faced with ? and nearly killed several times by ? various push button gadgets in a Museum of the Future .

= = Cultural references = =

In their original pitch to Fox , Groening and Cohen stated that they wanted the futuristic setting for the show to be neither " dark and drippy " like Blade Runner , nor " bland and boring " like The Jetsons . They felt that they could not make the future either a utopia or a dystopia because either option would eventually become boring . The creators gave careful consideration to the setting , and the influence of classic science fiction is evident in this episode as a series of references to ? and parodies of ? easily recognizable films , books and television programs . In the earliest glimpse of the future while Fry is frozen in the cryonic chamber , time is seen passing outside the window until reaching the year 3000 . This scene was inspired by a similar scene in the film The Time Machine based on H.G. Wells ' novel . When Fry awakens in the year 2999 , he is greeted with Terry 's catchphrase " Welcome to the world of tomorrow " . The scene is a joke at the expense of Futurama 's namesake , the Futurama ride at the 1939 World 's Fair whose tag line was " The World of Tomorrow " . Dick Clark made a cameo as a head in a jar , hosting Dick Clark 's New Year 's Rockin ' Eve 3000 .

In addition to the setting , part of the original concept for the show was that there would be a lot of advanced technology similar to that seen in Star Trek , but it would be constantly malfunctioning . The automatic doors at Applied Cryogenics resemble those in Star Trek : The Original Series ; however , they malfunction when Fry remarks on this similarity . In another twist , the two policemen who try to arrest Fry at the head museum use weapons which are visually similar to lightsabers used in the Star Wars film series ; however , they are functionally more similar to nightsticks . The interaction between the characters was not overlooked . The relationship formed between Fry and Bender in this episode has been compared to the relationship between Will Robinson and the robot in Lost in Space .

Although both Futurama and The Simpsons were created by Matt Groening , overt references to the latter are mostly avoided in Futurama . One of the few exceptions to this rule is the appearance

of Blinky , a three @-@ eyed orange fish seen on The Simpsons , as Fry is going through the tube . A running gag of the series is Bender 's fondness for Olde Fortran malt liquor , named after Olde English 800 malt liquor and the programming language Fortran . The drink was first introduced in this episode and became so closely associated with the character that he was featured with a bottle in both the Rocket USA wind @-@ up toy and the action figure released by Moore Action Collectibles .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

In a review by Patrick Lee in Science Fiction Weekly based on a viewing of this episode alone , Futurama was deemed not as funny as The Simpsons , particularly as " the satire is leavened with treacly sentimental bits about free will and loneliness " . The episode was rated as an " A- pick " and found to " warrant further viewing " despite these concerns . Rob Owen of the Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette noted that although the episode contained the same skewed humor as The Simpsons , it was not as smart and funny , and he attributed this to the large amount of exposition and character introduction required of a television series pilot , noting that the show was " off to a good start " . Andrew Billen of the New Statesman found the premise of the episode to be unoriginal , but remained somewhat enthusiastic about the future of the series . While he praised the humorous details of the episode , such as the background scenes while Fry was frozen , he also criticized the show 's dependence on in @-@ jokes such as Groening 's head being present in the head museum .

In its initial airing , the episode had " unprecedented strong numbers " with a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 2 / 17 in homes and 9 @. @ 6 / 23 in adults 18 ? 49 . The Futurama premiere was watched by more people than either its lead @-@ in show (The Simpsons) or the show following it (The X @-@ Files) , and it was the number one show among men aged 18 ? 49 and teenagers for the week . The episode was ranked in 2006 by IGN as number 14 in their list of the top 25 Futurama episodes .