

= Radio Bart =

" Radio Bart " is the thirteenth episode of The Simpsons ' third season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 9 , 1992 . In the episode , for his birthday Bart receives a microphone that transmits sound to nearby AM radios , and also uses a labelmaker to put " Property of Bart Simpson " on all his possessions . To play a prank on the citizens of Springfield , Bart places a radio deep inside a well and uses the microphone to trick the town into thinking a little boy is stuck in it . He enjoys the prank until Lisa reminds him of the " Property of Bart Simpson " label stuck to the radio . Whilst trying to retrieve it , Bart gets trapped in the well . Still smarting from his prank , the town leaves him down there . Eventually Homer decides to rescue Bart by himself .

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Carlos Baeza . Musician Sting guest starred in the episode as himself , though the producers originally approached Bruce Springsteen to appear . The episode features cultural references to charity singles such as " We Are the World " . Since airing , " Radio Bart " has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 14 @. @ 1 and was the highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired . It was nominated for an Emmy Award , but lost to A Claymation Easter .

= = Plot = =

The Simpson family are busy preparing for Bart 's birthday party . Homer sees a commercial on television for a prank microphone called the Superstar Celebrity Microphone that can be used to tap into localized AM radio systems and instantly decides to buy one for Bart. Subsequently , Bart experiences a crushingly disappointing birthday party when all his gifts turn out to be useless things like a cactus , a label maker , and a new suit . At first , he is also disappointed by the microphone , but later finds a use for it in creating practical jokes , such as tricking Ned Flanders ' boys into believing that God is talking to them , listening in on Lisa and Janey 's conversations about boys , and persuading Homer that martians are invading the Earth .

Bart plays a prank when he throws a radio down a well and speaks through it with the microphone , tricking the townspeople into thinking an orphan named Timmy O 'Toole has fallen down the well . Although they are unable to get " Timmy " out , as the well is too small for any adult to fit in , the entire town offers moral support and do everything they can to give him hope . Krusty even gets musician Sting to join other celebrities in recording a charity single , " We 're Sending Our Love Down the Well " . However , Lisa catches Bart in the act and reminds him he put a label with his name on the radio . Bart falls into the well while trying to retrieve it after Eddie and Lou unintentionally untie his rope . When the townspeople find him , he admits that Timmy O 'Toole does not exist . Angry at being tricked , the townspeople leave Bart in the well . After this , " We 're Sending Our Love Down The Well " dramatically falls off the number one spot all the way down to 97 , supplanted at number one by " I Do Believe We 're Naked " by Funky C , Funky Do .

Despite efforts by Homer and Marge to mobilize a rescue operation , the entire town remains outraged at Bart and are disinclined to help . After Bart cries , Homer finally has had enough : he decides to dig a tunnel and rescue Bart himself . Groundskeeper Willie sees this and joins Homer , starting an excavation operation . Bart is finally rescued ( with help from Sting and other residents ) and Willie puts up a small warning sign near the well the next morning to prevent future incidents instead of boarding the well up instead .

= = Production = =

" Radio Bart " was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Carlos Baeza , though series creator Matt Groening came up with the idea for it . The episode was based on the 1951 film Ace in the Hole , which sees the story of a former journalist exploiting a story about a man trapped in a cave to re @- @ jump start his career . Vitti did not watch the film until after the episode had been written ; " [ Groening ] came in out of nowhere and just gave me , start to finish , the whole story . " Vitti said renting the film was the first thing he did after finishing the script . He remarked , " It 's surprisingly

hard to rent . It 's really dark and funny and it 's by Billy Wilder , so you think it would be in stores , but it 's not . It was hard to find . "

The producers approached singer Bruce Springsteen to appear in the episode because he had participated to the charity song " We Are the World " , on which " We 're Sending Our Love Down the Well " is based . Springsteen declined so the producers offered the role to British musician Sting instead . Executive producer Al Jean said Sting is one of his favorite guest stars that have appeared on the show and he " couldn 't have been better . He was really funny . " The Simpsons director David Silverman said Sting 's appearance in the episode worked for his persona because he has campaigned for political and social causes in real life . Sting was staying in New York City at the time of the episode 's recording so Vitti flew there to record the lines with him .

The television commercial for the Superstar Celebrity Microphone that Homer watches , was inspired by a popular Ronco Mr. Microphone commercial from the late 1970s , in which a boy becomes popular and " scores with the girls " by using his microphone to be on the radio . Both commercials feature a boy riding by in a car full of friends saying , " Hey , good @-@ looking , we 'll be back to pick you up later , " a line the staff thought was " hilarious " . In the Superstar Celebrity Microphone commercial , the boy sings the 1975 song " Convoy " by C. W. McCall into the microphone . The producers originally wanted him to sing " The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald " by Gordon Lightfoot , a song about the sinking of the bulk carrier S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald on Lake Superior .

Vitti said the reason the song was not used was because Lightfoot had made it so that in order to clear the copyrights for song , they would have to get permission from the families of the twenty @-@ nine crewmen who died on the ship . In another scene , Bart uses his radio to make Homer believe aliens are invading Earth ; Homer was originally supposed to create a punch made from Kool @-@ Aid and rat poison so that he and the family could commit suicide before the aliens arrived . The writers thought this scene was " too dark " and younger viewers might copy him . The scene was changed to Homer brandishing a shotgun and going after the aliens , before finding out that Bart is playing a trick on him .

= = Cultural references = =

" Radio Bart " features several pop culture references . At the beginning of the episode , Homer watches the show Soul Train and its host Don Cornelius on television . The Wall E. Weasel pizza restaurant that Bart celebrates his birthday at is a parody of the family pizza restaurant franchise Chuck E. Cheese 's . The episode also parodies charity singles . The song " We 're Sending Our Love Down the Well " is a spoof of " We Are the World " , and the idea of celebrities singing it is based on USA for Africa , the name under which forty @-@ five famous artists recorded " We Are the World " . Funky @-@ See , Funky @-@ Do with their hit " I Do Believe We 're Naked " resembles the music style of Milli Vanilli .

This episode is similar to an incident involving Jessica McClure , who fell into a well and received support from citizens and celebrities . One citizen suggests using chocolate attached to a fish @-@ hook to save Timmy , a reference to a character from the 1975 film Jaws . Kay McFadden of The Seattle Times used " Radio Bart " as an example of the Simpsons writers ability to predict the future . He said " Radio Bart " aired more than five years before Princess Diana 's death that " provoked the exact same celebrity posturing and media panic " as seen in the episode . Timmy 's story is eventually bumped off the front page when the media discovers a squirrel who resembles Abraham Lincoln . Kay said Princess Diana 's death was " bumped by a fund @-@ raising imbroglio involving Vice President Al Gore , a political figure who resembles oatmeal , which squirrels sometimes eat . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Radio Bart " finished 31st in the ratings for the week of January 6 ? 12 , 1992 , with a Nielsen rating of 14 @.@ 1 , equivalent to approximately 13 million

viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . The episode was nominated for an Emmy Award in the " Outstanding Animated Program " category , but lost to Will Vinton 's A Claymation Easter on CBS . " Radio Bart " was submitted for consideration because it was the staff 's favorite episode of the season . Executive producer Al Jean said they thought this episode or an episode of Ren & Stimpy would win and they were " absolutely floored " when neither did . The Simpsons director David Silverman said he thinks The Simpsons and Ren & Stimpy split the vote , allowing A Claymation Easter to win the Emmy .

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It was named the second best episode of The Simpsons by Kirk Baird of the Las Vegas Sun and the third best episode by Sarah Culp of The Quindecim . DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson commented : " Despite the potential for some heavy @-@ handed moralizing , ' Radio Bart ' provides a terrific show . From Bart 's crappy birthday to his pranks to the public reaction to Timmy 's trapping , the humor flies fast and furious in this excellent episode . It 's one of the better ones . " The Daily Telegraph characterized the episode as one of ten best episodes of The Simpsons . DVD Times 's Chris Kaye said " Radio Bart " is " another demonstration of the series ' knack for cultural references , parodying the Billy Wilder movie Ace in the Hole . " Entertainment Weekly ranked " Radio Bart " as the twentieth best episode of The Simpsons and commented that " it 's a media parody so sharp , we 're still stinging a bit . "

Monsters and Critics 's Trent McMartin praised Sting 's guest performance , calling it " humorous " . Total Film 's Nathan Ditum ranked his performance as the 11th best guest appearance in the show 's history . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , commented that " The Police had a song called ' Canary in the Coalmine ' ( the episode contains a scene where a canary dies in the well , but is later determined by Dr. Hibbert to have died by " natural causes " ) , and Sting had made a point of campaigning for good causes , which explains why he was singled out in this sharp critique of celebrity posturing and media panic . " Tom Nawrocki of Rolling Stone rated the " We 're Sending Our Love Down the Well " song as one of the best musical moments in the history of the show .