

= Treehouse of Horror XIX =

" Treehouse of Horror XIX " is the fourth episode of the twentieth season of The Simpsons . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on November 2 , 2008 . This is the nineteenth Treehouse of Horror episode , and , like the other " Treehouse of Horror " episodes , contains three self @-@ contained segments : in " Untitled Robot Parody " , Transformer robots run amok in Springfield ; in " How to Get Ahead in Dead @-@ Vertising " , Homer is hired by ad agents to kill celebrities so their images can be used for free ; and in a Simpsons @-@ style parody of It 's the Great Pumpkin , Charlie Brown (called " It 's The Grand Pumpkin , Milhouse ") , Milhouse summons a demon pumpkin who goes berserk when it sees humans carving its brethren into jack @-@ o @-@ lanterns as part of Halloween tradition . It was written by Matt Warburton and directed by Bob Anderson .

A total of 12 @.@ 48 million viewers tuned in to watch during its first airing , more than any other episode since " The Wife Aquatic " . The episode received mixed reviews from critics , who generally regarded " It 's the Grand Pumpkin , Milhouse " as the best segment . Shortly after airing , the episode was criticized by the Gay , Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) because a character (Nelson Muntz) casually uses the adjective " gay " to insult The Grand Pumpkin .

= = Plot = =

In the opening scene , Homer tries to vote for Democratic Senator Barack Obama in the 2008 American presidential election . However , the voting machine is rigged to turn his vote into one for Republican Senator John McCain . After six attempts to vote Homer heads out to report the mishap (" This machine is RIGGED ! MUST TELL PRESIDENT MCCAIN ! ") but the machine sucks him in and kills him , then shoots out his body out of the voting booth . Jasper sticks a patriotic @-@ themed " I voted " sticker on Homer 's forehead .

= = = Untitled Robot Parody = = =

In a parody of Transformers , Bart buys Lisa a Malibu Stacy convertible as a Christmas present . However , the car turns out to be a Transformer . The robot transforms all of the technology in Springfield into robots so they can wage war with each other . Just as the two machine factions ' leaders prepare to face off , Marge asks why the robots are at war with one another ; as it turns out , they cannot even remember . Thanking Marge , the two sides declare that they will work together , only for the " Optimus Prime @-@ esque " robot to shout " we shall enslave your planet ! " The two factions of sentient machines work together to overthrow humanity in which they use Homer 's idea of Springfield 's residents in a game of foosball .

= = = How to Get Ahead in Dead @-@ Vertising = = =

Homer takes Maggie to a daycare and encourages her to enjoy a mural featuring Krusty the Clown to make her feel better while she is away from her parents . However , Krusty arrives to have the images of his face sandblasted from the mural , as his likeness is trademarked and used without his permission . This left Maggie upset and an outraged Homer shoves Krusty in retaliation , sending him flying into a wood chipper and shredded alive . Homer is later approached by two advertising agents who have heard of his deed and explain their plan to use celebrities ' likenesses in advertising without issues over permission by simply killing the celebrities who refuse to lend their names to advertising . Homer is then hired as a celebrity assassin , taking out such famous faces as George Clooney (by replacing wet cement with quicksand) , Prince (by strangling and stabbing him with his own guitar) and Neil Armstrong (by hitting him with a golf club , in the style of a Rube Goldberg machine) . In Heaven , the dead celebrities are outraged by this and stage an attack on the living , with Homer as their main target . Ghost Krusty blasts Homer in the head with a shotgun , after Ghost Krusty tells him that the one true religion is a mix between Methodist and voodoo .

Ghost Homer gets revenge by locking out all the celebrities in Heaven , but the joke is on him when an apparently gay Ghost Abraham Lincoln pretends to be Ghost Homer 's friend so he can hit on him for all eternity .

= = = It 's the Grand Pumpkin , Milhouse = = =

In a parody of It 's the Great Pumpkin , Charlie Brown , Milhouse waits in a pumpkin patch on Halloween for the Grand Pumpkin (which Bart made up) with Lisa . After Lisa sees everyone at school having a Halloween party , she grows tired of waiting and leaves in frustration . Milhouse starts to cry and his tears and childlike belief bring the Grand Pumpkin to life . However , the Pumpkin is appalled to find that his kindred pumpkins are being carved up on Halloween and made into pumpkin bread , originally thinking it was bread especially made for pumpkins until Milhouse revealed it is made from them , and vows revenge . He devours Homer as he carves a pumpkin , then marches to the school and eats Nelson who threatens to stab a yellow pumpkin . It becomes apparent at this point that the Grand Pumpkin is racist towards this type of pumpkin and then eats Groundskeeper Willie after being offered roasted pumpkin seeds . Realizing that Milhouse can bring things to life by believing in them , Lisa tells him about " Tom Turkey " , a symbol of Thanksgiving . Milhouse starts to believe in Tom Turkey , who comes to life and kills the Grand Pumpkin , freeing everyone he ate . However , when Tom Turkey learns that people eat turkeys on Thanksgiving from Bart , he vows revenge and starts angrily chasing children around the school , devouring some of them whole as Marge wishes the viewers happy holidays .

= = Production = =

The opening segment of the episode , which was leaked onto the internet weeks before the episode aired , features Homer voting for Barack Obama . Rather than taking sides in the election , executive producer Al Jean says it is " mostly a comment on what many people to believe to be the irregularities in our voting system . " " Untitled Robot Parody " is modeled on the live action Transformers film , rather than the cartoon . Al Jean said it was " just really fun to do transformations [and] you can see why they enjoyed doing that film . " " How to Get Ahead in Dead @-@ Vertising " featured a parody of the title sequence of Mad Men . Jean was a fan of the series and pitched the scene .

The final segment is based on the Halloween cartoon It 's the Great Pumpkin , Charlie Brown . It could not be titled " It 's the Great Pumpkin , Milhouse " to exactly match its namesake because of a " big legal issue " , according to Al Jean . However , the characters were redesigned to resemble the style of Peanuts , and they also obtained rights to use Vince Guaraldi 's music . Jean said in 2011 that " For years we had never been able to parody Charlie Brown 's Halloween special , which is one of the all @-@ time top three animated shows ever . The Vince Guaraldi music is such a huge part of it , so we got to clear it . It was just a dream come true to satirize it . I thought it was a really funny idea that instead of not ever seeing the Grand Pumpkin , it comes to life , and he 's really horrified at the way humans cook pumpkins into pies , and eat pumpkin seeds , which are basically pumpkin fetuses "

= = Cultural references = =

The first segment of the episode is a parody of Transformers . The second segment features a parody of the opening of Mad Men and Homer kills several celebrities , including Prince , George Clooney , and Neil Armstrong , set to the song " Psycho Killer " by Talking Heads . Other celebrities shown include Golda Meir , Edward G. Robinson , John Wayne and John Lennon , who says " All we 're saying is ' Let 's eat some brains ' " , a reference to the chorus of " Give Peace a Chance " by the Plastic Ono Band . The commercial " Planet of the Taste " is a parody of the 1968 film Planet of the Apes .

The second segment 's opening is a parody of the opening titles to AMC drama Mad Men .

The final segment , " It 's the Grand Pumpkin , Milhouse " is a parody of It 's the Great Pumpkin , Charlie Brown (and was supposed to be named " It 's The Great Pumpkin , Milhouse , " but due to legal reasons , was renamed) and contains several references to the Peanuts series . In the segment , Milhouse wears the same clothes and plays the same role as Linus van Pelt . Lisa is modelled after Sally Brown and Bart looks like Charlie Brown ; he even says " good grief " , echoing Charlie Brown 's catchphrase . The main theme to Peanuts " Linus and Lucy " is played several times . A redesigned version of Santa 's Little Helper can be seen sleeping on top of his dog house and Homer is seen sleeping on top of his house in a manner similar to Snoopy . When Marge first speaks , she uses a muted trombone . This is a parody of the " wah wah wah " voice that is used for adults in the various Peanuts specials . At the end of the segment , she says to the audience that they can send complaints to an address which she only says in more muted trombone noises . Milhouse ' prayer to the Grand Pumpkin is similar to the Nicene Creed . The dance scene during the Halloween party is a parody of the dance scene in A Charlie Brown Christmas right down to Kang and Kodos in a nonspeaking cameo as the twins 3 and 4 .

= = Reception = =

In its original airing , the episode was viewed in 12 @. @ 48 million viewers and achieved a 4 @. @ 9 Nielsen rating . It was the highest rated episode of the night in the 18 ? 49 demographic , the sixteenth highest rated show of the week , and the fourth highest rated on Fox after two airings of the World Series and House . It was the highest rated episode since season 18 's " The Wife Aquatic " .

" Treehouse of Horror XIX " received mixed reviews from critics . Rick Bentley of the Seattle Times described it as a " paint @-@ by @-@ numbers episode " . Robert Canning of IGN gave the episode a 7 @. @ 9 / 10 , calling it " funny , entertaining and even nostalgic [which] only makes this yearly tradition that much better . "

" It 's the Grand Pumpkin , Milhouse " was regarded by reviewers as the best segment in the episode . Canning wrote , " this segment may not be all that gory , but it 's funny and , quite honestly , it will just make you feel good " , and Bentley described it as " a dead @-@ on comedy assault of the Charlie Brown animated Halloween special . " Rob Owen of the Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette concurred , writing that it " succeeds because it offers sly cultural commentary . " Show Patrol wrote " The nostalgia factor makes ? Grand Pumpkin ? the best of these amusing bits for me , but they all lack that trademark ? Simpsons ? brand of satirical smartness . " Hal Boedeker of the Orlando Sentinel gave the episode a 4 / 5 and called the final segment a " witty parody of Charlie Brown 's Halloween classic . [...] The best gag , though , is a subtle one . Marge plays a trombone , a loving salute to the way the Peanuts specials portrayed adult voices . "

Director Bob Anderson received an Annie Award nomination for " Best Directing in an Animated Television Production " but lost to Avatar : The Last Airbender .

= = Controversy = =

The Gay , Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) , which was in the middle of running a campaign to prevent casual use of the adjective " gay " , criticized Nelson Muntz 's line " the Grand Pumpkin is super gay " . A spokesperson for the GLSEN said " many people say gay without even realizing what they 're saying is bad , we 're trying to educate people that this is a term that is hurtful to young people when used in a negative way . " The spokesperson added , " Nelson should send an apologetic e @-@ card to Milhouse . "