

= A Star Is Burns =

" A Star Is Burns " is the eighteenth episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 5 , 1995 . In the episode , Springfield decides to hold a film festival , and famed critic Jay Sherman is invited to be a judge . Homer , feeling that Marge does not respect him , asks that he be put on the jury panel and ends up voting for the stupidest movie .

The story involves a crossover with the short @-@ lived animated series The Critic . Jay Sherman was the main character on the show . The Critic was created by Al Jean and Mike Reiss , who had previously written for The Simpsons but left following the fourth season , and produced by James L. Brooks , who was also a producer for The Simpsons . The show had premiered on the American Broadcasting Company ( ABC ) network in January 1994 but was canceled despite positive critical reception . The series was switched over to Fox , and put in the timeslot directly after The Simpsons . Brooks pitched a crossover episode as a way to promote The Critic and decided that a film festival would be a good way to introduce Sherman .

Matt Groening , creator of The Simpsons , reacted negatively when he heard about this episode , feeling that it was just an advertisement for The Critic , and that people would incorrectly associate the show with him . When he was unsuccessful in getting the program pulled , he had his name removed from the credits and went public with his concerns , openly criticizing James L. Brooks and saying the episode " violates the Simpsons ' universe . " In response , Brooks said " I am furious with Matt , [ ... ] he 's allowed his opinion , but airing this publicly in the press is going too far . [ ... ] his behavior right now is rotten . "

The episode was directed by Susie Dietter and was the first episode to be written by Ken Keeler . Jon Lovitz , the star of The Critic , guest stars as Jay Sherman , while Maurice LaMarche ( who was also a regular on The Critic ) has a few minor roles . Sherman later became an infrequently recurring character on The Simpsons . The episode received mixed reviews from critics , many of whom felt the crossover was out of place on the show although Barney 's film festival entry was well received .

= = Plot = =

News anchor Kent Brockman reports that Springfield is the least cultural city in the United States . In response , a town meeting is held to decide a course of action , where Marge proposes that Springfield host a film festival showcasing films made by the townspeople . Marge is made the head of the festival 's judging panel , and invites New York film critic Jay Sherman to be a special guest critic . Upon his arrival , Jay stays with the Simpson family , which becomes problematic as his popularity with the family makes Homer feel inadequate and overshadowed . Homer fears that nobody respects his intelligence by voicing his concerns . Marge tries to convince him that everyone does respect him , but his crude behaviour is the only thing they do not respect . Unconvinced by it , Homer persuades Marge to put him on the festival 's judging panel to try to prove himself to others that he is more than unintelligent . Meanwhile , when Mr. Burns learns that his profits have dropped due to his bad image , Waylon Smithers informs him of the film festival . Burns decides that an epic biographical film will endear him to the people , so he hires Steven Spielberg 's " non @-@ union , Mexican equivalent , " Señor Spielbergo to direct and deciding to play himself in the film after the auditions to have an actor portray him fail screen test .

The film festival commences at the Aztec Theatre , with entries including Apu Nahasapeemapetilon 's Bright Lights , Beef Jerky ( security footage from the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart ) , Moe Szyslak 's musical number , Moe Better Booze ( little more than a song @-@ and @-@ dance advertisement for Moe 's Tavern ) , Bart 's The Eternal Struggle ( a home video of Homer attempting to squeeze into a pair of undersized pants ) , Ned Flanders ' film about Moses ( in which Todd , playing baby Moses , is dragged down a river until God saves him ) , and Hans Moleman 's , Man Getting Hit by Football , which only features Moleman getting hit in the groin by a football . Moleman 's movie makes Homer laugh , but Marge is displeased with him when she hears him announce that he should get the grand prize . Jay reminds Homer that he cannot quickly judge on one movie . Festival attendees are particularly touched by Barney Gumble 's artistic introspective film about alcoholism ,

Pukahontas , which Jay ( later a victim of football in the groin ) foresees to be the eventual winner . Burns ' film , A Burns for All Seasons , is screened last , and is met with a negative audience reaction . The audience jeers at Mr. Burns for it , because it is nothing more than ego driven and poorly made to try to portray him in a more positive light .

In the judge 's room , Jay and Marge vote for Barney 's film , while Mayor Quimby and Krusty the Clown vote for Burns ' movie after many bribes and also due to being ego @-@ driven themselves . Left with the tie @-@ breaking vote , Homer quickly and enthusiastically votes for Man Getting Hit by Football . Marge confronts him for voting for the worst movie , even after he joined the judging panel . Homer tries to defend himself , but Jay points out there is more to life than seeing someone being hit with a football . Finally convinced to change his vote , Homer asks Marge to let him view the films again in private and she agrees . Later on , he views Pukahontas again while reflecting on the two films ' qualities . Eventually , Homer sees the soul of Barney 's film and makes his decision . At the awards ceremony , Jay announces that Barney is the grand prize winner , and Marge is proud of Homer for voting for the right film . During his acceptance speech Barney announces he 's giving up drinking , but immediately relapses when he discovers his prize is a one year 's supply of Duff beer .

Flashing forward six months , Burns is at the Academy Awards , where despite having bribed everyone in Hollywood , he loses out on an Oscar to George C. Scott in a remake of Man Getting Hit by Football . Marge laments that now is the time that Mr. Burns learn his lesson that he should not bribe everyone .

= = Production = =

The Critic was a short @-@ lived animated series that revolved around the life of movie critic Jay Sherman . It was created by Al Jean and Mike Reiss , who had previously written for The Simpsons but left after the fourth season , and executive produced by James L. Brooks . Jon Lovitz ( who had previously guest starred in several episodes of The Simpsons ) starred as Jay Sherman , and it also featured the voices of The Simpsons regulars Nancy Cartwright , Doris Grau and Russi Taylor . It was first broadcast on ABC in January 1994 and was well received by critics , but did not catch on with viewers and was put on hiatus after six weeks . It returned in June 1994 and completed airing its initial production run .

For the second season of The Critic , James L. Brooks cut a deal with the Fox network to have the series switch over . The episode was pitched by Brooks , who had wanted a crossover that would help launch The Critic on Fox , and he thought having a film festival in Springfield would be a good way to introduce Sherman . After Brooks pitched the episode , the script was written by Ken Keeler . Although David Mirkin was executive producer for most of the sixth season , the episode was executive produced by Al Jean and Mike Reiss . Jay Sherman 's appearance was Simpsonized : he was made yellow and given an overbite .

The episode contains a meta @-@ reference to the fact that it is a crossover episode in a conversation Bart has with Sherman :

[ Bart is watching television ] Announcer : Coming up next , The Flintstones meet The Jetsons .

Bart : Uh oh . I smell another cheap cartoon crossover .

[ Homer enters the room with Jay ] Homer : Bart Simpson , meet Jay Sherman , the critic .

Jay : Hello .

Bart : Hey man , I really love your show . I think all kids should watch it ! [ turns away ] Ew , I suddenly feel so dirty .

The joke was pitched by Al Jean .

Alongside Jon Lovitz , the episode guest stars Maurice LaMarche , a regular on The Critic , who voices George C. Scott as well as Jay Sherman 's belch . Phil Hartman also makes a brief appearance as Charlton Heston . Rainier Wolfcastle 's line " on closer inspection , these are loafers " was ad @-@ libbed by Dan Castellaneta who was providing the voice of the character on a temporary track . It was later re @-@ recorded by Wolfcastle 's normal voice actor , Harry Shearer .

= = Cultural references = =

The Imperial March from The Empire Strikes Back is played as Mr. Burns is introduced . The song the " Rappin ' Rabbis " play in the opening moments of the episode is a parody of " U Can 't Touch This " by MC Hammer . The opening of Bart 's film The Eternal Struggle is a reference to The Amazing Criswell 's narration in Plan 9 from Outer Space . Barney 's film contains references to Koyaanisqatsi , and the music of the film , which was composed by Philip Glass . Barney 's film also features musical selections from the aria " Un bel di vedremo " from Act II , pt . 1 of Puccini 's opera " Madama Butterfly " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " A Star Is Burns " finished 57th in the ratings for the week of February 27 to March 5 , 1995 . The episode was the third highest rated show on the Fox network that week , beaten only by Melrose Place and Beverly Hills , 90210 . The Critic finished 64th . On March 12 , 2002 , the episode was released in the United States on a DVD collection titled The Simpsons Film Festival , along with the season eleven episode " Beyond Blunderdome " , the season four episode " Itchy & Scratchy : The Movie " , and the season seven episode " 22 Short Films About Springfield " .

The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , wrote , " Jay Sherman perhaps proves here , even more so than in The Critic , just why that show failed . He 's too flawed to be likeable . " They added , " Barney 's film is magnificent , but it 's easy to see why Homer wants Hans Moleman to be the winner . " Adam Finley of TV Squad wrote " the episode , even if I didn 't care for it as a whole , does have moments that are still very Simpson @-@ y , and still very funny . Jay 's appearance , however , casts a shadow over everything that tends to leave a bad taste in my mouth . " Todd Gilchrist of IGN listed Barney 's film as one of the best moments of the sixth season .

The A.V. Club named Hans Moleman 's line " I was saying ' Boo @-@ urns ' " , and Mr Burns ' " Then get me his non @-@ union , Mexican equivalent ! " as two quotations from The Simpsons that can be used in everyday situations . IGN ranked Jon Lovitz as the eighth best guest star in the show 's history .

= = = Controversy = = =

Matt Groening , creator of The Simpsons , was a critic of the episode when it was first released . He felt that the crossover was a thirty @-@ minute advertisement and blamed James L. Brooks , calling it an attempt to get attention for one of his unsuccessful shows . After he was unable to get the episode pulled , he decided to go public with his concerns shortly before the episode aired . He stated that his reasons for doing so were that he hoped Brooks would have a change of heart and pull the episode , and that " articles began to appear in several newspapers around the country saying that [ Groening ] created ' The Critic . ' " Groening had his name removed from the credits , so he does not receive his normal " created by " and " developed by " credits that air at the end of the opening sequence .

In response , James L. Brooks said " I am furious with Matt , he 's been going to everybody who wears a suit at Fox and complaining about this . When he voiced his concerns about how to draw The Critic into the Simpsons ' universe he was right and we agreed to his changes . Certainly he 's allowed his opinion , but airing this publicly in the press is going too far . [ ... ] He is a gifted , adorable , cuddly ingrate . But his behavior right now is rotten . "

Al Jean and Mike Reiss , creators of The Critic , had previously worked on The Simpsons and had executive produced the third and fourth seasons . Brooks said , " for years , Al and Mike were two guys who worked their hearts out on this show , staying up until 4 in the morning to get it right . The point is , Matt 's name has been on Mike 's and Al 's scripts and he has taken plenty of credit for a lot of their great work . In fact , he is the direct beneficiary of their work . The Critic is their shot and

he should be giving them his support . " Reiss stated that he was a " little upset " by Groening 's actions and that " this taints everything at the last minute . [ ... ] This episode doesn 't say ' Watch The Critic ' all over it . " Jean added " What bothers me about all of this , is that now people may get the impression that this Simpsons episode is less than good . It stands on its own even if The Critic never existed . "

Groening was criticized for going public with his complaints . Ray Richmond of the Los Angeles Daily News wrote " who 's right ? Well , Groening is probably correct in judging this an integrity issue . It 's a fairly tacky bit of promotion , the kind generally beneath The Simpsons . But it 's also true that little is accomplished by taking a gripe like this public . Quietly erasing his name from the credits would have been sufficient . [ ... ] I admire the man 's standing up for his creative rights . But I question the way he 's gone about it . "

As a result , Groening was absent from the episode 's commentary for The Complete Sixth Season DVD boxset .

= = = Legacy = = =

In the end , The Critic was short @-@ lived , broadcasting ten episodes on Fox before its cancellation . A total of only 23 episodes were produced , and it returned briefly in 2000 with a series of ten internet broadcast webisodes . The series has since developed a cult following thanks to reruns on Comedy Central and its complete series release on DVD .

Jay Sherman has since become an infrequently recurring character on The Simpsons , appearing in speaking roles in " Hurricane Neddy " and " The Ziff Who Came to Dinner . "