

= Bart Carny =

" Bart Carny " is the twelfth episode of The Simpsons ' ninth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 11 , 1998 . Homer and Bart start working at a carnival and befriend a father and son duo named Cooder and Spud . It was written by John Swartzwelder , directed by Mark Kirkland and guest stars Jim Varney as Cooder the carny . The episode contains several cultural references and received a generally mixed critical reception .

= = Plot = =

When Marge unsuccessfully tries to get the kids to clean up the backyard , Homer runs into the house to exclaim to the family that the carnival is in town . After trying some rides , Bart gets himself into trouble by crashing a display of Hitler 's limousine into a tree . To repay the loss , Bart and Homer become carnies .

They meet up with carnies Cooder and his son , Spud . Cooder asks Homer to run his fixed game , but Homer fails to bribe Chief Wiggum , and Cooder 's game is shut down . Feeling guilty , Homer invites Cooder and Spud to stay at the Simpson residence , much to Marge 's dismay .

To express their gratitude , the Cooders give the Simpsons tickets on a glass @-@ bottom boat ride . When the Simpsons return , they find that the locks have been changed , the windows are all boarded up , and the Simpsons ' name is crossed off the mailbox and replaced by " The Cooders " . The family is forced to take up residence in Bart 's treehouse .

Homer proposes to Cooder , that if he can throw a hula hoop onto the chimney , they get their house back . If he misses , he will sign the deed over to Cooder . Cooder agrees and steps onto the lawn to watch Homer 's attempt . Homer stretches and warms up , as if about to throw , but instead he and his family suddenly rush into the house , leaving Cooder and Spud dumbfounded .

= = Production = =

The carnival in this episode is based on The Eastern States Exposition ( currently known as The Big E ) fair . As a child , Mike Scully went to the fair , and had hoped one day to be a carny . This is the only episode that Mark Kirkland did not tell his parents to watch . This is due to Bart 's line " Out of my way , I 'm Hitler " . Kirkland 's stepfather was a lieutenant in World War II and was injured while in combat . Cooder was modeled after David Mirkin , the showrunner of seasons five and six and co @-@ writer and the executive producer of two episodes in the ninth season . Spud 's head shape is modeled after Bart 's head . The " fisheye effect " , when Cooder is looking through the peep hole was drawn by hand , not optically by assistant director Matthew Nastuk . Matt Groening said they had several endings worked out , including one where Homer made the hula hoop over the chimney .

= = Cultural references = =

When Homer and Bart talk through their teeth while holding the chickens , it is a reference to Bob Hope and Bing Crosby films . Some of the prizes for the ring toss game are a Def Leppard mirror , a Rubik 's Cube , and a Magic 8 @-@ Ball . The song being played , at the end when Homer fixes his " ass groove " is " Groove Me " by King Floyd .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Bart Carny " finished 13th in ratings for the week of January 5 ? 11 , 1998 , with a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 9 , equivalent to approximately 11 @.@ 7 million viewing households , making it the highest rated episode of Season 9 . It was tied with King of the Hill as the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @-@ Files .

The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons

Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , called it " one of the most dismally unfunny episodes ever , lifted only by the brief appearance of a talking camel and Homer 's clever way of getting Cooder and Spud out of his home . Whereas most of the series ' politically incorrect moments are funny and well @-@ observed , this episode seems to be saying that fairground folk and travelers really are deeply unpleasant criminals who are both irredeemable and unworthy of help . Nasty @-@ taste @-@ in @-@ the @-@ mouth time . " Despite the negative review from I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Isaac Mitchell @-@ Frey of the Herald Sun described the episode as " brilliant " , and highlighted it along with episodes " The Trouble with Trillions " and " The Joy of Sect " and it has been described by the other Simpsons writers in the DVD audio commentary as " criminally underrated " .