

= Homer Loves Flanders =

" Homer Loves Flanders " is the sixteenth episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 17 , 1994 . In the episode , Ned Flanders invites Homer to a football game and the two become good friends . However , Ned soon grows weary of Homer 's overbearing friendship and stupid antics , and begins to hate him .

The episode was written by David Richardson and directed by Wesley Archer . It was the last episode to be pitched by writer Conan O 'Brien before he left The Simpsons . The episode features cultural references to films such as Terminator 2 : Judgment Day , The Deadly Tower , and The Ten Commandments , and songs such as " Two Tickets to Paradise " , " Macho Man " , and " Helter Skelter " . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 9 , and was the third highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Homer is distraught when he is unable to acquire tickets for an upcoming football game involving the Springfield Atoms . When Ned Flanders wins two tickets to the game on a radio competition , he invites Homer as his guest . Though reluctant because of his dislike of Flanders , Homer is desperate to attend the game and accepts . Ned pays for all the food and even gets the winning quarterback , Stan " The Boy " Taylor , to give the game ball to Homer . Overwhelmed by Ned 's generosity and no longer ashamed to be associated with him , Homer becomes friends with Ned and his family . Homer begins acting overly grateful and annoys Ned and his family to no end by interrupting their family time together . The situation is not helped after Homer follows Ned to a homeless shelter for charity work ; Homer becomes bored with Ned 's slowly dishing soup for the homeless and takes over , however his impatience is mistaken for generosity by a newspaper photographer , and the resulting article declares Homer a hero . Homer 's popularity with the townspeople surges and eclipses Ned 's reputation . The Flanders family and the Simpson family go on a camping trip , but the families do not get along . When the Simpsons initiate a food fight , Ned later tells his wife that he has grown to hate Homer .

Upon returning home , Homer remains oblivious to Ned 's animosity . He arrives at the Flanders 's house expecting to play golf , but Flanders and his family get in their car and race off without him . Pulled over by Chief Wiggum for speeding , Ned takes a sobriety test as disapproving townspeople watch , and his good name is destroyed after Wiggum announces that Ned is " high as a kite " (even though he simply fell over) . At church , when the entire congregation bow their heads in prayer , Homer inhales very loudly through his nose , causing Ned to finally snap and yell at Homer . This alarms the congregation who denounce Flanders as bitter and jealous , but nevertheless , Homer sticks up for Ned and everyone apologizes to him for not getting the full story and misjudging him . Ned is touched at Homer for sticking up for him and the two reconcile their friendship .

Shocked , Lisa and Bart , thinking that everything would be back to normal by now , consider that this may be the end of their wacky adventures . However , the following week , Homer once again hates Ned and everything is back to normal , much to Lisa and Bart 's relief . The family then spends the night in a haunted house (which formerly belonged to Homer 's Great Uncle Boris) , and are heard screaming after the lights go out .

= = Production = =

" Homer Loves Flanders " was the last episode to be pitched by Conan O 'Brien before he left The Simpsons . David Richardson was assigned to write it , and Wesley Archer to direct it . Richardson wrote the episode at a Motel 6 in Hemet , California while he was dating an actress who was shooting a film there . In this season , the staff wanted to take a deeper look at the relationships of the characters . One of the things they wanted to explore in particular was what Homer and Flanders have in common and how they could turn into friends . Former show runner David Mirkin enjoyed

making Homer and Flanders get along because they do not normally act that way .

The episode begins with the Simpson family watching a news broadcast in which the news anchor Kent Brockman calls the United States Army a " kill @-@ bot factory " . Mirkin said this was a joke the staff " particularly loved to do " because it pointed out how negative and mean @-@ spirited news broadcasts can be , and how they are seemingly " always trying to scare everybody " by creating panic and depression . In one scene in the episode , Marge begins hallucinating after drinking from Springfield 's water supply , which has been spiked with LSD by Springfield 's rival town , Shelbyville . The Fox network 's censors wanted the scene to be cut from the episode because they did not like the idea of Marge " getting high " on LSD . Mirkin , however , defended the scene and argued Marge was not " doing it on purpose " , so the censors ultimately allowed the scene to remain in the episode . In another scene , Homer becomes frustrated at God for not getting the tickets to the game , so yells at a waffle stuck to the ceiling that he believes is God . Marge points out to him , however , that it is just a waffle that Bart threw up there . This scene , inspired by some melted caramel stuck to the ceiling of the Simpsons writers ' room , is one of Mirkin 's and Richardson 's " all time favorite " jokes .

= = Cultural references = =

When Homer hears the 1978 song " Two Tickets to Paradise " by Eddie Money on the radio , he sings along and plays air guitar . As Homer is eating nachos at the football game , he makes up a song called " Nacho Man " , a reference to Village People 's 1978 song " Macho Man " . When Flanders is mistakenly arrested for taking drugs , Chief Wiggum asks him " Where 's your Messiah now ? " , a line commonly mistakenly believed to be spoken by Edward G. Robinson 's character Dathan in the 1956 film The Ten Commandments but in fact originates from Billy Crystal 's stand @-@ up impersonation of Robinson . Ned 's dream involves him shooting at people inside the university clock tower based on the 1975 movie The Deadly Tower , itself based on Charles Whitman 's 1966 killing spree . The scene where Homer chases Flanders 's car is a parallel of the sequence in Terminator 2 : Judgment Day , in which Robert Patrick 's character T @-@ 1000 chases the heroes in the police car after escaping from the hospital . When Rod and Todd are watching television in the Flanders 's living room , a picture of Leonardo da Vinci 's painting The Last Supper can be seen behind them . The homeless shelter that Homer and Flanders visit is called Helter Shelter , a reference to the 1968 song " Helter Skelter " by The Beatles .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Homer Loves Flanders " finished 43rd in the ratings for the week of March 14 ? 20 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 9 . The episode was the third highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following Beverly Hills , 90210 and Melrose Place .

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . In 2007 , Patrick Enright of MSNBC called the episode his eighth favorite of the show . He praised the references to Terminator 2 in the episode , as well as Lisa 's self @-@ referential quote about how , " by next week , we 'll be back to where we started from , ready for another wacky adventure . " The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , thought the episode had " some great existential musings " from Lisa . They added that it also " contains some nice moments highlighting the differences between the Simpsons and the Flanders . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said : " I always remembered [" Homer Loves Flanders "] to be a great episode ? and I recalled correctly . Sure , the show goes with a less than creative presence ; it ? s an easy story to make characters behave in atypical ways . However , the development of the theme is terrific , as we learn the friendship of Homer Simpson is worse than the antagonism of Homer Simpson . " DVD Talk gave the episode a 4 out of 5 score . Patrick Bromley of DVD Verdict gave the episode a B ? grade , claiming the " rather large dose of sentimentality " and " fewer moments of absurdity " in the episode gave it " the feeling

that it belongs in one of the series ' earlier seasons " . The Orlando Sentinel 's Gregory Hardy named it the second best episode of the show with a sports theme .