

= Homer the Vigilante =

" Homer the Vigilante " is the eleventh episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 6 , 1994 . In the episode , a crime wave caused by an elusive cat burglar plagues Springfield . Lisa is distraught to find her saxophone has been stolen , and Homer promises to get it back . The police are ineffective , so Homer takes charge of a neighborhood watch . However , under his leadership it becomes more like a vigilante group , and fails to catch the burglar . With the help of Grampa , Homer discovers that the burglar is a charming senior named Molloy . Molloy is arrested , but he outwits the citizens of Springfield and escapes .

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Jim Reardon . Sam Neill guest starred in the episode as Molloy . " Homer the Vigilante " was selected for release in a 1997 video collection of selected episodes titled : The Simpsons : Crime and Punishment . It features cultural references to films such as It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World and Dr. Strangelove . Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 2 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

A number of burglaries by a cat burglar take place in Springfield , even striking the Simpsons ' house . Among the stolen items include Lisa 's saxophone , Marge 's pearl necklace , Bart 's stamp collection , and the handheld television . In response , the residents of Springfield arm themselves and install security devices . A neighborhood watch group is formed , and the members elect Homer as their leader . The group patrols the streets , but its members only end up violating laws further than catching criminals , turning into vigilantes . When Homer is interviewed on news anchor Kent Brockman 's Smartline , the cat burglar calls the show and informs Homer that he will steal the world 's largest cubic zirconia from the Springfield museum .

Homer and his group begin guarding the museum . Grampa and his friends from the retirement home volunteer to help , but Homer tells them to leave because they are too old . A few minutes later , Homer sees a group of teenagers drinking beer . He leaves his post to intervene and catch them , but immediately ends up getting drunk with them instead . While Homer 's guard is down , the cat burglar sneaks past and steals the zirconia . Homer is blamed and pelted with vegetables by the unforgiving townspeople . Later that day , Grampa stops by the Simpsons ' house and tells everybody that he knows who the cat burglar is : a resident in the local retirement home named Molloy .

Homer captures Molloy at the retirement home , and the surprisingly amiable cat burglar returns the objects he stole . Chief Wiggum arrests him and he is imprisoned . While in his cell at the police station , Molloy casually mentions that he assumes Homer and the cops probably want to know where he hid all of his loot . This piques their interest , and Molloy tells them the stash is hidden under a giant " T " somewhere in Springfield . They all rush out of the station hoping to get the treasure for themselves . In a matter of minutes the entire town hears of the existence of Molloy 's stash and almost everybody in Springfield is racing to get there first . After the residents get to the site and dig , they finally discover a box with a note inside . The note tells them that there is no treasure and that while they have been searching , Molloy has escaped from his cell . However , several citizens continue to dig , convinced that a real treasure must be buried deeper .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Jim Reardon . New Zealand actor Sam Neill guest starred in the episode as Molloy , the cat burglar . Executive producer David Mirkin thought Neill , a big The Simpsons fan , was " lovely " to direct . Mirkin also said Neill was " really game " and did " a terrific job " on the episode . Neill considers recording this episode to be a " high @-@ point " of his career . One scene of the episode features Kent Brockman reporting on the burglaries . Mirkin said this was a joke the staff enjoyed doing 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 .

" Homer the Vigilante " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 6 , 1994 . The episode was selected for release in a 1997 video collection of selected episodes titled : The Simpsons : Crime and Punishment . Other episodes included in the collection set were " Marge in Chains " , " Bart the Fink " , and " You Only Move Twice " . It was included in The Simpsons season five DVD set , The Simpsons - The Complete Fifth Season , which was released on December 21 , 2004 . Creator Matt Groening , supervising director David Silverman , and Mirkin appeared in the episode 's audio commentary on the season five DVD . The episode was again included in the 2005 DVD release of the Crime and Punishment set .

= = Cultural references = =

The Molloy character is based on actor David Niven 's performance as the character A. J. Raffles , a gentleman thief , in the 1939 film Raffles . The music heard at the beginning of the episode during the burglaries is taken from the film The Pink Panther , in which Niven played The Phantom , a similar character . Flanders tells Homer that his Shroud of Turin beach towels were stolen during one of the burglaries . Homer 's dream of riding a nuclear bomb into oblivion is a reference to the famous scene from the film Dr. Strangelove or : How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb . Homer 's line " So I said , Look buddy , your car was upside @-@ down when I got here . And as for your grandmother , she shouldn 't have mouthed off like that ! " is a reference to Flannery O 'Connor 's short story A Good Man Is Hard to Find . The scene of Homer and Principal Skinner talking in front of the museum is a reference to a scene from the television series Dragnet . In a reference to the plot of the 1963 film It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World , Molloy sends the residents of Springfield on a hunt for a treasure that is buried under a big letter . The ending sequence of the episode also references the film by using the same music and camera angles . In another scene that references It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World , Bart tricks American actor Phil Silvers into driving his car into a river , just like Silvers 's character did in the film .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Homer the Vigilante " finished 41st in the ratings for the week of January 3 ? 9 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 2 , equivalent to approximately 11 @.@ 5 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . 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 it was " a bit lacking in focus " , but it contained " a number of satisfying set @-@ pieces ? we like Professor Frink 's walking house security system ? and displays Wiggum at his all @-@ time most useless . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson wrote : " After the many plots of the prior show , ' Vigilante ' maintains a much tighter focus . It ? s not quite as wonderful an episode as its immediate predecessor , but it ? s strong nonetheless . Much of the humor comes from Homer ? s newfound power and abuse of it . If nothing else , it ? s a great program due to Homer ? s reaction to Lisa ? s jug playing . " Les Winan of Box Office Prophets named " Homer the Vigilante " , " Cape Feare " , " Homer Goes to College " , " \$ pringfield " , and " Deep Space Homer " his favorite episodes of season five . It was also the Liverpool Daily Post 's Mike Chapple 's favorite episode of the season together with " Bart Gets an Elephant " and " Burns ' Heir " . Patrick Bromley of DVD Verdict gave the episode a grade of B , and Bill Gibron of DVD Talk gave it a score of 4 out of 5 .