

= Bart Gets an Elephant =

" Bart Gets an Elephant " is the seventeenth episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 31 , 1994 . In this episode , Bart wins a radio contest and is awarded a full @-@ grown African elephant that he names Stampy . After Stampy wrecks the Simpsons ' house and eats all the food , Homer decides to sell Stampy to an ivory dealer . Bart runs away with Stampy to save his pet , but the family finds the two at a museum exhibit , where Homer falls into a tar pit . Homer is saved by Stampy , and so gives the elephant away to an animal refuge instead .

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder , and directed by Jim Reardon . It introduced the fictional elephant Stampy , and marks the first appearance of the recurring character Cletus Spuckler . The episode features cultural references to the songs " Sixteen Tons " and " Do @-@ Re @-@ Mi " , and the La Brea Tar Pits cluster of tar pits located in Hancock Park in Los Angeles , California . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 7 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

During a cleaning day at the Simpsons ' house , Bart wins a KBBL radio contest after the station 's DJs , Bill and Marty , call him . They give Bart the choice of two prizes : \$ 10 @,@ 000 in cash or the " gag " prize ? a full @-@ grown African elephant ? and Bart chooses the elephant . This surprises Bill and Marty , who (understandably) believed that no one would ever actually take the gag prize , and thus have no elephant to give away . They instead offer Bart the money and a variety of other prizes , all of which he refuses , saying that he only wants the elephant - this leads to Bart being thrown out of the recording studios . Word spreads throughout town about Bill and Marty 's refusal to give Bart an elephant , prompting their boss to give them a choice : either arrange for the delivery of an elephant , or lose their jobs to a DJ machine . They decide on the former option .

Bart names his new elephant Stampy and ties him to a post in the backyard . Lisa complains that it 's cruel to keep an animal like an elephant as a pet , while Homer is concerned that Stampy will eat him out of house and home . In an effort to offset food costs , Bart and Homer exhibit Stampy by charging customers to see and ride him , but fail to earn enough to cover even one day 's food bill . After raising the prices for customers to see and ride the elephant fails , Homer declares they can 't afford the elephant and must sell him , much to Bart 's dismay . The family is visited by a representative of a game reserve , who says their acres of open land similar to the African savannah would be a good habitat for the elephant to live in . However , Homer dismisses this as he learns that he won 't receive any money for it since the reserve is a nonprofit organization .

A wildlife poacher named Mr. Blackheart then offers to buy Stampy . Homer wants to take the money , but Bart and Lisa are against the idea , especially after Mr. Blackheart openly admits to being an ivory dealer . Homer and Mr. Blackheart reach a deal , but Bart and Stampy run off in the night , wreaking havoc throughout Springfield , and are soon nowhere to be found . The family begins searching and eventually finds them at the Springfield Tar Pits , where Homer still plans to sell Stampy to the ivory dealer for the money . Bart and Lisa then angrily ask if Homer would like to be sold to an ivory dealer himself , to which Homer responds positively , before finding out that he 's stuck in one of the tar pits . Bart orders Stampy to free Homer , to which he does (after first pulling out Barney Gumble) . A grateful Homer finally agrees to donate the elephant to the wildlife reserve .

While at the reserve , Bart tearfully says goodbye to Stampy . After that , Stampy starts head @-@ butting some of the other elephants , cheered on by Bart. Marge is surprised by this , and the representative explains that , in many ways , animals are a lot like humans : some act badly because they 've had a hard life or they 've been mistreated ; but , like humans , some animals are just jerks (which he says as Homer himself is head @-@ butting him) .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder , and directed by Jim Reardon . The Simpsons ' creator Matt Groening thought it was a " quintessential " Swartzwelder episode , and executive producer / show runner David Mirkin said it was a " fantastic job by one of the most prolific writers of the show " . The most important thing to Mirkin while making the episode was to make sure that the elephant would be a " bastard " and behave rudely , unlike other animals on the show . For example , instead of putting people on his back , Stampy would put them in his mouth . Mirkin said the elephant " never quite bonds because it 's a very cantankerous animal , a concept that was very important to this episode " . Stampy has since been used several times in jokes later on in the series . For example , Stampy made an appearance in the season nine episode " Miracle on Evergreen Terrace " in one of Bart 's dreams , and in the season fourteen episode " Large Marge " , where he is used by Bart in a stunt to help Krusty the Clown win back his popularity . Stampy appeared briefly in The Simpsons Movie , where he tries to break down the giant glass dome lowered over Springfield . The episode also introduces the character Cletus Spuckler . He is shown as one of the " slack @-@ jawed yokels " gawking at Stampy in the Simpson family 's backyard . Cletus is not named in the episode , so the staff simply referred to him as the Slack @-@ Jawed Yokel .

= = Cultural references = =

The Springfield Tar Pits are inspired by the La Brea Tar Pits located in Hancock Park in Los Angeles , California . The museum in the background of the scene where Homer sinks into one of the tar pits resembles the George C. Page Museum of the La Brea Discoveries . When Stampy runs away , he passes the Republican National Convention , with people cheering , and then he passes the Democratic National Convention , with people booing . This is a reference to the fact that an elephant is the symbol of the Republican Party . Homer uses Mr. Cleanser , a parody of the detergent brand Mr. Clean , to clean the basement . While waiting for Bill and Marty to call , Bart eats the chocolate part of a Neapolitan ice cream . As Bart cleans , he accidentally scrubs the paint off an American Gothic painting hanging on the wall . Under the paint is a message signed by the painter , Grant Wood , reading : " If you can read this , you scrubbed too hard . "

The scene in which Stampy 's eye is seen through a window of the Simpson family 's house is similar to a scene with a Tyrannosaurus rex in the film Jurassic Park . While cleaning the house , Marge turns on the radio and the song " Sixteen Tons " by Merle Travis is heard . The scene in which Homer crashes his car into a deer statue at the Springfield Tar Pits parodies the lyrics to the Sound of Music song " Do @-@ Re @-@ Mi " as Homer shouts : " D 'oh ! " followed by Lisa : " A deer ! " and Marge : " A female deer ! " Homer reads an old TV Guide in which the synopsis of an episode of Gomer Pyle , U.S.M.C. reads " Gomer upsets Sgt. Carter " , a possible synopsis for every episode of that series . He also imagines the episode with a thought of both Carter and Pyle standing next to each other . Carter yells , " Pyle ! " and Pyle responds , " Shazam ! " . As Stampy wreaks havoc throughout Springfield , Patty and Selma are sucked up by a tornado and fly through the air in rocking chairs , similar to a scene in the 1939 film The Wizard of Oz .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Bart Gets an Elephant " finished forty @-@ second in the ratings for the week of March 28 to April 20 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 7 , equivalent to 10 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . The episode won an Environmental Media Award in the Best Television Episodic Comedy category , which has been awarded every year since 1991 to the best television episode with an environmental message . The episode has also received a Genesis Award in the Best Television Comedy Series category . The Genesis Awards are given out annually by the Humane Society of the United States " to the news and entertainment media for shining that spotlight into the darkest corners of animal abuse and exploitation . "

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 , wrote : " Another favourite . It 's hard to explain the special appeal of this episode . Perhaps it 's because Homer is so exceptionally dumb . Or perhaps because it contains the ' D 'oh ! ' ' A deer ! ' ' A female deer ! ' gag . " This gag was also praised by BBC News 's Mark Milne , who said : " [It] just cracks me up every time . Brilliant ! " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson thought the fifth season included " plenty of programs with potentially cheesy concepts " , such as " Deep Space Homer " and " Bart Gets an Elephant " . However , he thought the episode managed to " easily overcome its possible flaws " to turn into a " very fine program " . Homer 's line " Marge , I agree with you in theory . In theory , communism works ? In theory " was Jacobson 's favorite of the episode . Patrick Bromley of DVD Verdict gave the episode a grade of A , and Bill Gibron of DVD Talk gave it a score of 4 out of 5 .