

= Treehouse of Horror XXII =

" Treehouse of Horror XXII " is the third episode of the twenty @-@ third season and the twenty @-@ second Halloween episode of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 30 , 2011 . The episode is part of the Treehouse of Horror series , which is an episode divided into three separate stories and an opening that is a parody of scary or Halloween themed stories . This episode 's stories were primarily spoofs of the French film The Diving Bell and the Butterfly , the television series Dexter , and the American film Avatar . The opening was a parody of the autobiographical film 127 Hours , in which the subject Aron Ralston loses an arm .

The episode was written by Carolyn Omine , directed by Matthew Faughnan , and featured guest voices from Aron Ralston and Jackie Mason . In its original American broadcast , it was viewed by approximately 8 @. @ 1 million people . The critical reception was very diverse , ranging from a plea to end the show to a statement that the show is on top of its game and should not be cancelled . The episode featured a reference to the Broadway musical Spider @-@ Man : Turn Off the Dark . After watching the show , the producers of the musical released a press statement in which they told how flattered they were when their show was mentioned on The Simpsons .

= = Plot = =

= = = Opening = = =

When Bart , Lisa and Maggie come home from trick @-@ or @-@ treating , Marge switches out the candy with dental hygiene products and asks Homer to deliver the candy to a drive for the troops overseas . Homer instead runs off with the bag to eat its contents in privacy at a canyon cliff . Unfortunately , Homer trips and falls to the bottom of the canyon with his arm pinned . Fueled by his need to get the out @-@ of @-@ reach bag of candy , and reluctant to wait twenty minutes for help , Homer is forced to chew off his arm . Though he manages it after a few tries , Homer learns that he was carrying a bag of vegetables , as Bart , Lisa and Maggie had secretly stolen back their candy , inciting an upset Homer to scream in rage .

= = = The Diving Bell and the Butterball = = =

In a parody of The Diving Bell and the Butterfly , Homer begins to decorate the house for Halloween and is reaching for a decoration in a box . Unfortunately , there is a real Black Widow spider in the box and when Homer grabs what he thinks is a plastic spider , he is bitten it . The bite leaves Homer paralyzed , unable to move or talk . When Lisa reads for him , she discovers that he can communicate through farting . The Simpson family is amazed at the result and Lisa helps Homer tell Marge how he feels about her . When he is again bitten by another spider ( a radioactive one this time ) , he gains the ability to shoot spider webs out of his rear end and have the same abilities as Spider @-@ Man , though he is still unable to move or talk .

= = = Dial D for Diddily = = =

In a parody of Dexter , after hearing a voice that he thinks is God tell him to murder people , Ned Flanders becomes a serial killing vigilante , targeting characters who are Homer 's enemies . When Flanders discovers that Homer is the one who has been duping him into committing murder ( by way of a Bible @-@ shaped receiver ) , Homer argues that God does not exist and starts burning Ned 's bible , only to be stopped and strangled to death by God Himself . Marge begs God to reverse everything that has happened , but God tells her that Satan is the one who is running the world . When Flanders thinks that this scenario cannot get any worse , it is revealed that Satan is having sex with Ned 's deceased wife , Maude .

= = = In the Na 'vi = = =

In a parody of Avatar , taking place in the future , Krusty the Clown is still alive , but has trouble entertaining his Nazi audience . On the distant planet Rigel 7 , there is a sacred extract called Hilarrium , which causes people to get in a better mood . Krusty desperately needs this sacred extract and uses military force to obtain it . The military recruits Bart and Milhouse to befriend the alien race in avatar bodies . They succeed in this and Bart ends up getting Kang 's daughter pregnant . It turns out that the extract Hilarrium , which is excreted by their queen , is primarily used by the natives to reduce the mood swings of pregnant women . After Bart and Milhouse are shown where the alien race gets the Hilarrium , Milhouse then reveals the location of the extract to the military , which then attacks the natives . In the battle , the natives are helped by all the animals of the planet , which eventually defeats the military . Kang and Kodos then admit that they would have just given the Hilarrium to the humans .

= = = Ending = = =

At the end , a Christmas carol is played as all of the characters that appeared say various things about Christmas , such as Marge saying that making a sweater causes 27 people to lose their jobs . At the very end , Grampa Simpson shows up in a black tutu , asking when the Black Swan comes up , and everyone wonders when the Black Swan will come .

= = Production = =

" Treehouse of Horror XXII " was written by Carolyn Omine and directed by Matthew Faughnan . The episode is part of the Treehouse of Horror series , which since the second season , has been a tradition for The Simpsons to air a new Halloween special each year . Treehouse of Horror episodes typically consist of four parts : an opening and Halloween @-@ themed version of the credits , followed by three segments . These segments usually have a horror , science fiction or fantasy theme and quite often are parodies of films , novels , plays , television shows , Twilight Zone episodes , or old issues of EC Comics . The episode featured guest appearances from Jackie Mason and Aron Ralston , who was the subject of the film 127 Hours . Mason has a recurring role on The Simpsons as Rabbi Hyman Krustofski , who is the father of Krusty the Clown . As it is tradition with most Treehouse of Horror episodes , this episode featured the use of " scary " names in the credits , which is to write alternate names for cast and crew in a " scary " fashion . Ralston came up with his own scary name for the credits , which was Aron " I gave my right arm to be on ' The Simpsons ' " Ralstump .

The episode marks the first time of all the Treehouse of Horror episodes that an actual theremin was used for music cues . Previously , the show had trouble locating a theremin player , who could work under the time constraints of the show . Instead , the show used a synthesizer keyboard to play a theremin sample - much to creator Matt Groening 's displeasure . The situation turned when a scene in " Homer Scissorhands " was written to feature Milhouse playing the theremin . Now the crew had to find a suitable theremin player and Charles Richard Lester was hired for that episode as well as " Treehouse of Horror XXII " .

The opening segment had many parodies and references to films . When the segment opens , the Simpson family is dressed up for Halloween . Here Maggie pops out of Bart 's astronaut suit , dressed as a baby alien , which is a reference to the 1979 film Alien . Homer is dressed as Doctor Manhattan from the 2009 superhero film Watchmen . During the middle , there is a spoof of the 1960 film Psycho , as the same music and similar scenes are used ( E.G : Reverend Lovejoy eyeing Homer in his car . In the end of the segment , it turns into a spoof of the 2010 film 127 Hours , in which Ralston loses his arm after being trapped under a rock . Ralston voiced the 911 dispatcher Homer calls when he is trapped .

" The Diving Bell and the Butterball " was a satire of the 2007 French film The Diving Bell and the

Butterfly , in which a paralyzed man learns to communicate through moving his eyelids . Instead of moving his eyelids , Homer communicated through flatulence . The segment took off in different direction when Homer was bitten by another spider and turned into a paralyzed Spider @-@ Man with reversed colors , swinging around Springfield and fighting crime . The last part references the Spider @-@ Man musical , Spider @-@ Man : Turn Off the Dark that was plagued by stage malfunctions and sometimes left its performers to dangle in mid @-@ air . The many accidents caused five people to become injured while working on the musical .

The last two segments were also parodies of popular culture . " Dial D for Diddly " featured various references to the television series , Dexter , the titular character whom Ned Flanders is supposed to represent when he goes on a killing spree . The music in the segment is the original music from the main title theme of Dexter by Rolfe Kent , although the title references Dial M for Murder . Two of the targets , Patty and Selma Bouvier , were killed in a similar fashion to the style of Wile E. Coyote . " In the Na 'vi " was a parody of the 2009 film Avatar . In the end , Kang and Kodos mentions that " there is no word for ? yours ? or ? mine . ? " , which is why they do not enjoy the 1968 film Yours , Mine and Ours ( or the 2005 remake ) .

= = Release = =

= = = Broadcast = = =

" Treehouse of Horror XXII " originally aired on Fox in the United States on October 30 , 2011 , the night before Halloween . In recent years , this Treehouse of Horror episode aired closest to Halloween without leaving October . The release date was unusual for a Treehouse of Horror episode , because ever since Fox got the rights to the Major League Baseball playoffs , most of the Halloween specials aired in the first week of November . This only marks the second time Fox has aired a Treehouse of Horror episode in October since 1999 ? in 2009 it aired nearly two weeks before Halloween . Major League Baseball decided to move the 2011 World Series earlier than the previous season so that no games would be played in November , leaving October 30 free for Fox to air " Treehouse of Horror XXII " on that date . When The Wrap asked show runner Al Jean if he was satisfied with the airing the night before Halloween , Jean said : " Yes , and the perfect thing is , Halloween is actually a bad day to air it , because nobody watches TV that night . Especially if they have kids . So October 30th , it is our Halloween . People can watch it and then still go out the next night . " As of 2015 every Treehouse of Horror episode following " Treehouse of Horror XXII " has aired during the month of October .

Treehouse of Horror XXII aired closest to Halloween without going over . ( October 30 , 2011 ) . The last time TOH actually aired on Halloween night was in 1999 .

The episode was watched by approximately 8 @. @ 10 million people during the first broadcast . The show received a 4 @. @ 0 Nielsen rating in the demographic for adults aged 18 ? 49 and a ten percent share of the audience , which was a 33 percent increase from the previous episode " Bart Stops to Smell the Roosevelts " . The Simpsons became the highest @-@ rated program in Fox 's Animation Domination lineup that night both in terms of viewers and in the 18 ? 49 demographic . It finished before Family Guy , The Cleveland Show and the series premiere of Allen Gregory . Besides a broadcast of a NFL Football game between the Dallas Cowboys and the Philadelphia Eagles on NBC , The Simpsons was the most watched program of the night in the 18 ? 49 demographic . In comparison , the episode increased eight percent over the previous year 's " Treehouse of Horror XXI " , which had a 3 @. @ 7 Nielsen rating and a nine percent share of the audience in the 18 ? 49 demographic . For the week of October 24 ? 30 , 2011 , The Simpsons finished 14th in the 18 ? 49 demographic , fourth in the 18 ? 34 demographic , and third among teenagers .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Since airing , " Treehouse of Horror XXII " has received mixed reviews from critics . Josh Harrison of Ology was positive and gave the episode a rating of seven out of ten , but commented that he preferred " episodes that feature longer , more involved storylines more than the spoof collections . " At The A.V. Club , Hayden Childs gave the episode a C + grade , saying , " The writers seem unwilling to mock the more outrageous aspects of the movies they are sending up and settle for weakly batting at the obvious . Some of the jokes land , but none land too solidly . " Meredith Woerner of io9 thought that " [ t ] he whole thing never quite achieved the same level of brilliance as some previous years ? even though the Avatar bit was funny , we 've seen so many Avatar spoofs by now that , well , it 's tired . However we did get a lot of joy out of seeing Homer dressed up as Doctor Manhattan and Maggie as a wee @-@ little chest burster . " Even more critical was CraveOnline 's Blair Marnell who gave the episode a rating of three out of ten . He commented that " there is no stronger argument for ending ' The Simpsons ' than the latest Halloween installment of ' Treehouse of Horror ' " and further said that " in all honesty , it 's amazing how tame ' The Simpsons ' has become over the years . This show used to be the ' South Park ' of its day . Now it 's just showing its age and it 's no longer the cool TV rebel that it used to be . " Alex Strachan had the opposite reaction in a review in Calgary Herald and concluded that we should " [ f ]orget all that talk about The Simpsons being past its prime . Based on tonight 's sharp @-@ eyed , keen @-@ witted Treehouse of Horror XXII - funnier , faster and more fright @-@ worthy than last year 's dud , thankfully - there 's a lot of ink left in the old ink pot yet . "

The first segment , " The Diving Bell and the Butterball " , was met with mixed reactions . Marnell called the parody " wildly unfunny " , while Childs was critical of Homer turning into a paralyzed Spider @-@ Man and stated that it was " simply not very funny . " Tim Surette of TV.com was more ambivalent and said : " I found this sketch to be simultaneously awesome and terrible because I have the maturity of a 6 @-@ year old and the intelligence of an average man . " The reference to the Broadway musical Spider @-@ Man : Turn Off the Dark was noticed by the producers of the musical . They reacted by issuing a statement the following day : " Everyone at ' Spider @-@ Man : Turn Off the Dark ' was extremely flattered by last night 's tribute on ' The Simpsons . ' ' The Simpsons ' is an iconic American institution , and being part of last night 's episode was an honor and dream come true . " Coincidentally , the previous aired episode of South Park , " Broadway Bro Down " , also had a reference to the musical , but the spokesperson for the Broadway show did not want to comment on that episode .

The response for " Dial D for Diddly " was that it started well , but then gradually declined . In Marnell 's opinion , " [ t ] he best segment of the entire episode comes when Ned makes his normal routine look sinister and yet when he finally closes his hands to pray , he 's actually holding a pair of severed hands " , but as for the rest of the segment , he is disappointed : " [ W ]hen it seems like the short is heading for some darkly hilarious territory , the voice of God turns out to be Homer urging Ned to murder his enemies . " Other reviewers agreed with his assessment . Surette concluded that the episode " [ s ]tarted off good , but got boring very quick . " Likewise , Childs commented that the " segment had a lot of promise for the funny , but it started to sag fast and then sank altogether . "

Much of the criticism towards the Avatar spoof " In the Na 'Vi " goes towards the timing of the episode . Surette thought that it was " [ a ]n Avatar spoof that came about two years too late . This sketch had no redeeming qualities and should be erased from the minds of all Simpsons fans immediately . " Similarly , Marnell commented that in the episode " The Simpsons ' finally gets around to parodying ' Avatar ' ? a movie picked to death by ' South Park ' and other series a year or two ago " and further elaborated that " [ i ]t 's almost a straight forward retelling of ' Avatar ' without the biting satire that made the film parodies of previous years so much fun . " In general , Treehouse of Horror episodes take about a year to complete for the staff . This is because they have to do many original designs , such as characters and backgrounds . Prior to the airing of the episode , Jean revealed that the staff was already working on " Treehouse of Horror XXIII " .

At the 39th Annual Annie Awards , Omine won the " Writing in a Television Production " category for her work on " Treehouse of Horror XXII " .