

= Who Shot Mr. Burns ? =

" Who Shot Mr. Burns ? " is a two @-@ part episode of The Simpsons . Part One is the twenty @-@ fifth and final episode of the sixth season and originally aired on Fox on May 21 , 1995 , while Part Two is the season premiere of the seventh season and aired on September 17 , 1995 . Springfield Elementary School strikes oil , but Mr. Burns steals it and at the same time brings misery to many of Springfield 's citizens . Part One has a cliffhanger ending where Mr. Burns is shot by an unidentified assailant . In Part Two , Springfield 's police try to find the culprit , with their main suspects being Waylon Smithers and Homer Simpson .

Both episodes were written by Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein ; Part One was directed by Jeffrey Lynch and Part Two by Wes Archer . Musician Tito Puente guest stars as himself in both parts . " Who Shot Mr. Burns ? " was conceived by series creator Matt Groening and the writing staff decided to turn it into a two @-@ part mystery episode . Part One contains several clues about the identity of the culprit because the writers wanted it to be solvable .

The concept for the two @-@ part episode was the episode of the primetime soap Dallas titled " A House Divided " , known by most as " Who shot J.R. ? " in which character J.R. Ewing was shot . In the months following the airing of Part One , there was much widespread debate among fans of the series as to who actually shot Mr. Burns and in many ways the public reaction and response to the episode mirrored that of its " Who shot J.R. ? " inspiration . Over the summer of 1995 , Fox offered a related contest which was one of the first such endeavors to tie in elements of television and the Internet .

= = Plot = =

= = = Part One = = =

Principal Skinner walks into school and discovers that the class gerbil , " Superdude " , has died . As Groundskeeper Willie digs a grave , he unexpectedly strikes oil . Skinner and Superintendent Chalmers lavishly think of ways to spend the school 's newfound wealth , taking many student requests , including Lisa 's suggestion of hiring Tito Puente as a music teacher .

At the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant , Homer is disturbed that Mr. Burns can never remember his name , even after working for him for ten years . He takes a suggestion from Marge and sends Mr. Burns a box of chocolates with a family picture underneath the candy ; however , Burns and Smithers are not interested in the one candy covering Homer 's face and discard the box . As a result , Burns writes a " thank you " card only to Marge , Bart , Lisa and Maggie , further angering Homer .

Meanwhile , Mr. Burns learns of the school 's oil and immediately decides that he must have it , even as Smithers voices his disapproval . After failing to convince Skinner to give him the oil through a poor deception , Mr. Burns establishes a slant drilling operation and beats the school to tapping the oil well . The school is told they have no legal recourse , and Willie and Puente are laid off to cover the school 's losses .

Mr. Burns ' drilling operation causes further harm and distress to many Springfield citizens : Moe 's Tavern is closed due to the harmful fumes from the drilling , leaving Moe and Barney enraged ; the drilling wrecks the Springfield Retirement Castle , leaving Grampa homeless , forcing him to move in with the Simpsons ; and Bart 's treehouse is destroyed by a burst of oil from the rig , which also injures Santa 's Little Helper .

Mr. Burns then reveals to Smithers his grandest scheme : the construction of a giant , movable disc that will permanently block out the sun in Springfield , forcing the residents to continuously use the electricity from his power plant . A horrified Smithers finally stands up to Mr. Burns , insisting that he has gone too far ; Burns fires him in response .

Later , Homer sneaks into Mr. Burns ' office and spray @-@ paints " I am Homer Simpson " on the wall in giant letters . Mr. Burns catches him in the act , but yet still seemingly does not recognize

Homer . In a rage , Homer attacks him and is hauled away by security . All the citizens affected by Mr. Burns ' mad schemes , including Homer and even Smithers , swear revenge .

A town meeting is held to discuss Mr. Burns ' actions . Mr. Burns arrives , armed with a gun after his encounter with Homer . Despite the whole town standing up to him , he activates the sun @-@ blocking device , thinking himself invincible . He walks into an alley , obscured from view , and says : " Oh it 's you , what are you so happy about ? ... I see . I think you 'd better drop it . " He struggles with someone until a gunshot is heard . He stumbles out into the open , wounded , and collapses on the town 's sundial . The townspeople find him and Marge tells all of them that since Burns has angered so many people recently , just about anyone could have been the shooter .

= = = Part Two = = =

As Mr. Burns fights for life at the hospital , the Springfield police are working to find his assailant . Smithers wakes up the next morning and vaguely remembers shooting someone the night before in a drunken rage . Guilt @-@ ridden , Smithers heads for a local church , and is promptly arrested when the confessional turns out to be a police sting . While passing the media in his way to the police station , Smithers makes a witty remark that Sideshow Mel recognizes from an episode of Pardon My Zinger that aired at the same time as the shooting . Mel realizes that Smithers must have watched it as well , giving him an alibi . As Smithers ' memory clears , it turns out that he had actually shot Jasper in his wooden leg .

With one of the prime suspects cleared , the police , aided by Lisa , eliminate other suspects , including Tito Puente ( whose revenge took the form of a " slanderous mambo " ) , Skinner ( who was busy applying what he thought was camouflage make @-@ up at the time of the shooting ) , Willie ( who cannot fire a pistol due to arthritis in his index fingers ) , and Moe ( who is cleared via polygraph test ) . After a surreal dream about Lisa , Wiggum finds an eyelash on Mr. Burns ' suit which matches Simpson DNA . At the same time , Mr. Burns wakes up from his coma and cries , " Homer Simpson ! "

The police raid the Simpson home and find a gun under the seat of their car , covered with Homer 's fingerprints and loaded with bullets that match the one fired into Mr. Burns . Homer is arrested for attempted murder , but escapes from the paddywagon when it overturns while the police are trying to pick up a Drive @-@ Thru meal . Smithers offers a reward for his capture .

At the hospital , it is revealed that " Homer Simpson " is the only thing that Mr. Burns can say , suggesting that his supposed " accusation " may not have actually been one . Hoping to clear Homer 's name , Lisa returns to the scene of the crime to investigate and figures out the identity of Mr. Burns ' true assailant . At the same time , Homer arrives at the hospital to confront Mr. Burns and demand that Burns exonerate him , despite being somewhat impressed that Burns finally remembered his name . After a police bulletin reports Homer 's location , the police , Lisa and many other citizens of Springfield all race to the hospital . Upon entering Mr. Burns ' room , everyone finds an enraged Homer vigorously shaking Burns and demanding that he take back his accusation . Homer 's shaking him returns Mr. Burns 's ability to speak normally , and he quickly asks who the person shaking him is . Apoplectic with fury at Burns again not remembering who he is , Homer grabs Wiggum 's gun and aims it at Mr. Burns ' face , demanding that Burns recant his accusations . Mr. Burns then laughs at the idea and confirms that Homer did not shoot him . He then reveals the true assailant : Maggie Simpson .

Mr. Burns reveals that , after leaving the town meeting , he came across Maggie eating a lollipop in the Simpsons ' car . Mr. Burns decided to try stealing candy from a baby , but Maggie would not let go of the lollipop , resulting in a struggle . As he finally yanked it away , his gun slipped from its holster into Maggie 's hands and fired at Burns . The gun and lollipop both then fell beneath the car seat ; Homer would later unknowingly leave fingerprints on the gun while feeling around under the seat for an ice cream cone he accidentally dropped . Lisa guesses that with his last strength , Burns must have pointed at the " S " and " W " on the sundial ( with the " W " appearing as an " M " from his perspective ) , to identify his assailant ; Mr. Burns corrects her , saying that he was actually swallowing his gold fillings to protect them from being pilfered by the paramedics . The " S " and " M

" were purely coincidental .

Mr. Burns demands for Maggie to be arrested for the crime , but he is dismissed by Chief Wiggum , who says that no jury would convict a baby for a crime , except " maybe Texas " . Marge also adds that the shooting must have been an accident , considering the fact that Maggie does not know how to operate a gun . The final shot shows Maggie with shifty eyes suggesting it may not have been an accident after all .

= = Production = =

The idea for the episode came from Matt Groening , who had wanted to do an episode in which Mr. Burns was shot , which could be used as a publicity stunt . The writers decided to write the episode in two parts with a mystery that could be used in a contest . It was important for them to design a mystery that had clues , took advantage of freeze frame technology , and was structured around one character who seemed the obvious culprit . While deciding who the culprit was , Oakley and Weinstein pitched Barney Gumble because he was a character that could go to jail and it could change the dynamic of the show . Mirkin suggested Maggie because he felt it was funnier and wanted the culprit to be a Simpsons family member . Oakley and Weinstein were initially unsure about having Maggie as the culprit , and it was decided that the episode would end with Maggie shifting her eyes and making it look like it was not a complete accident .

The producers worked hard to keep the ending of the episode a secret . While it was in production , David Silverman was the only animator who knew who the culprit was . Wes Archer , director of the episode , was initially unaware of the solution and directed the episode up until the conclusion . When it was time to animate the ending of the show , Silverman and Archer waited until the end of the summer of 1995 to work on it . They realized they needed help with the layouts and started giving various animators small parts to work on without telling them who the culprit was . The table read for the episode also ended before the third act . The writers had wanted the clues that were animated to be just right , so there were many animation retakes .

Tito Puente and his Latin jazz ensemble appear in the episode and sing the song " Señor Burns " . Oakley and Weinstein were unfamiliar with Puente and wrote him into the episode because Groening is a fan . They figured he would sing the song , but later discovered that Puente was a drummer , not a singer . The lyrics were sung by one of Puente 's band members . His band would also play their version of The Simpsons ' theme over the end credits .

= = = Hidden clues = = =

A number of subtle clues , and a few red herrings , were planted in Part One for viewers who wanted to unravel the mystery .

Almost every clock is set at three or nine o 'clock . The point of the clocks was to teach the viewer to view the sundial at the end upside down .

Mr. Burns looks from his balcony and talks about stealing candy from a baby .

When Mr. Burns collapses on the sundial , he points at W and S , although from his viewpoint , the W looks like an M.

Many of the suspects have the letters S and W or M in their initials and the intention was that several " obvious " suspects could be eliminated by the letters . Several characters already had names with those initials , but some were made up specifically for this episode. Principal Skinner 's full name is revealed to be " W. Seymour Skinner " on a diploma in his office .

Mr. Burns calls Santa 's Little Helper the " Simpson Mutt " .

Moe 's liquor license reveals that his full name is Moe Szyslak .

Grampa 's gun was a Smith & Wesson .

Just before entering Mr. Burns ' office to spray paint his name , Homer passes in front of the words " ONLY IN " on the pavement ( upside down from the viewer 's perspective ) , and very briefly blocks all of the letters except " NO " and a small arrow pointing at him .

A television in Moe 's Tavern shows that " Pardon My Zinger " is broadcast on weekdays at 3 PM

on Comedy Central . It is later revealed that Burns is shot at 3 PM . Smithers reveals at the meeting that he never misses the show , and afterward is seen heading in the opposite direction that Burns heads .

During the scene at the town hall , several citizens are seen stroking guns : Smithers has a revolver , an unidentified woman also has a revolver , Moe has a shotgun , Skinner has a semi @-@ automatic handgun with a suppressor attached , and Barney has a derringer .

As Mr. Burns collapses on the sundial , it is seen that the gun he was previously carrying has gone missing . This was inserted as an intentional freeze frame clue .

= = = Alternate endings = = =

Due to the amount of interest in the ending of this episode , David Mirkin wrote several " terrible endings " and , with just Harry Shearer , recorded several alternate endings . His original intention was to fool the production staff and also leak the endings to various media outlets , but much to his surprise he was unsuccessful . Several endings were animated that showed various characters shooting Mr. Burns . Several of the alternate endings aired during the clip show " The Simpsons 138th Episode Spectacular " . Various clips showed Apu , Moe , Barney , Tito , and even Santa 's Little Helper as the gunmen . There was also a full @-@ length conclusion that aired in which Smithers shot Burns and explained his doing so at Burns 's bedside after Homer 's wild chase , and fell on " W " and S " on the compass , Waylon 's initials ; Burns then decides to give Smithers a 5 percent pay cut for attempting to kill him .

= = Contest = =

In the months following the broadcast of Part One , there was widespread debate among fans of the series as to who shot Mr. Burns . Fox offered a contest to tie in with the mystery where callers who dialed 1 @-@ 800 @-@ COLLECT were eligible and they then guessed who the culprit was . It ran from August 13 to September 10 and was one of the first contests to tie together elements of television and the Internet . Fox launched a new website , [www.Springfield.com](http://www.Springfield.com) , devoted to the mystery which got over 500 @,@ 000 hits during the summer of 1995 . The winner would be animated on an episode of the show . Due to contest regulations , a winner had to be selected out of a random sample of entries . The sample did not contain any correct answers , and so a winner ( who had the wrong answer ) was chosen at random . However , the winner , Fayla Gibson of Washington D.C. , did not watch the show and opted to accept a cash prize in lieu of being animated .

The contest is referenced at the end of the episode when Dr. Hibbert says , " Well I couldn 't possibly solve this mystery ... Can you ? "

= = Springfield 's Most Wanted = =

Springfield 's Most Wanted was a TV special hosted by John Walsh , host of America 's Most Wanted . The special aired on September 17 , 1995 , at 7 : 30 P.M. ET before Part Two of Who Shot Mr. Burns ? . A parody of Walsh 's television series , this special was designed to help people find out who shot Mr. Burns , by laying out the potential clues and identifying the possible suspects . It features opinions from former Los Angeles police chief Daryl Gates and predictions from Dennis Franz , Courtney Thorne @-@ Smith , Kevin Nealon , Chris Elliott , and Andrew Shue . It was directed by Bill Brown and written by Jack Parmeter and Bob Bain .

The special was criticized for taking the publicity of the episode too far . Several critics said the special tainted host John Walsh 's credibility and was described as gimmicky , tacky , and " blatant groveling for viewers " . The special averaged an 8 @.@ 4 Nielsen Rating and finished 50th in the United States in the ratings for the week of September 11 ? 17 , 1995 .

= = Cultural references = =

The title and concept for these two episodes were taken from the series Dallas . In the " Who shot J. R. ? " plot line , J. R. Ewing is shot in the season finale . The identity of the assailant was not revealed until the following season , leaving viewers to wonder for months which of Ewing 's many enemies was the culprit .

When Mr. Burns refers to his package at the beginning of the episode , he states that it " absolutely , positively " has to arrive in Pasadena , California , the following day , a reference to an early FedEx slogan . The song Mr. Burns sings to a lamp @-@ post echo the lyrics of Simon & Garfunkel 's song " The 59th Street Bridge Song ( Feelin ' Groovy ) " . The musical score that ends the first episode ( when the credits roll ) is a parody of John Williams ' Drummers ' Salute , which is part of the musical score he composed for Oliver Stone 's film JFK . During the scene in Part One where Moe 's bar is closed , an episode of Mystery Science Theater 3000 is playing on the television in the background following a promotion for the fictional program Pardon My Zinger at 3 : 00pm . Homer 's file photo with the Springfield Police Department shows him after a recent beating and wearing a T @-@ shirt that says , " Haig in ' 88 , " a reference to former Secretary of State Alexander Haig 's controversial bid for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1988 .

The opening of Part Two , wherein Smithers realizes that he merely dreamed about shooting Mr. Burns , is a reference to the episode " Blast from the Past " from Dallas , in which the events of the entire eighth season were explained away as being merely a character 's dream . The dream itself , in which Smithers and Burns are undercover detectives on the 1960s Speedway racing circuit , parodied The Mod Squad . Groundskeeper Willie 's interrogation , and particularly his crossing and uncrossing his legs , is a parody of Sharon Stone 's famous interrogation scene in Basic Instinct . The nightclub is called ' Chez Guevara ' , a reference to Communist revolutionary Che Guevara .

Homer 's escape from the overturned paddy wagon is a homage to the 1993 film The Fugitive . Chief Wiggum 's dream in which Lisa speaks backwards is reference to Twin Peaks and Special Agent Dale Cooper 's interaction with the Man from Another Place . While recording Lisa 's lines for the segment , Yeardley Smith recorded the part backwards ; the recording was in turn reversed , a technique known as phonetic reversal , the same technique used on Twin Peaks . Several other parts out of the segment are direct references to the dream , including a moving shadow on the curtain , and Wiggum 's hair standing straight up after waking .

= = Reception = =

Part One finished 51st with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 7 , the fifth highest rated Fox show of the week . Part Two averaged 12 @. @ 3 million households and a 12 @. @ 9 Nielsen rating . It finished sixteenth in the United States in the ratings for the week of September 11 ? 17 , 1995 , finishing first in its time slot and was the highest rated show on the Fox network that week . It helped the Fox network rank third overall for that week at a time when Fox was usually finishing fourth .

In 2003 , Entertainment Weekly published a Top 25 Simpsons episode list and placed both parts of " Who Shot Mr. Burns ? " in 25th place , saying " a two @-@ part comedic homage to Dallas ' Who shot J.R. ? stunt , [ Who Shot Mr. Burns ] is perhaps The Simpsons ' most grandiose pop moment ever " . The Daily Telegraph characterized the episode as one of " The 10 Best Simpsons TV Episodes . "

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 " A superb end to the season ? and what 's more , it 's a genuine whodunnit . There 's no cheating ? all the clues are there . " Jake Rossen of Wizard called the ending the sixth greatest cliffhanger of all time but expressed disappointment in the resolution , saying , " Sometimes it 's better to make up your own ending , kids . " In 2008 , Entertainment Weekly included Part One in their list of the best television season finales of all time .

The song " Señor Burns " , which was composed by Alf Clausen and written by Bill Oakley & Josh Weinstein was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award in 1996 for " Outstanding Individual Achievement in Music and Lyrics " . Tito Puente ranked 19th on AOL 's list of their favorite 25 Simpsons guest stars .

