

= Life on the Fast Lane =

" Life on the Fast Lane " , also known as " Jacques to Be Wild " , is the ninth episode of The Simpsons ' first season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 18 , 1990 . It was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by David Silverman . Albert Brooks guest starred as Jacques , a French bowling instructor , with him being credited as " A. Brooks " .

The episode deals with how Homer 's thoughtlessness precipitates Marge 's infatuation with her bowling instructor Jacques , leading to a marriage crisis between her and Homer . In the original plan for the episode , Brooks (who improvised much of his dialogue) was to voice a Swedish tennis coach called Björn , with the episode to be titled " Björn To Be Wild " . The episode features a parody of the film An Officer and a Gentleman and won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (for Programming Less Than One Hour) in 1990 .

= = Plot = =

Homer , unaware that it is Marge 's birthday , rushes out to buy her a present at the Springfield Mall . He finds a bowling ball and decides to buy it for her . During the night of her birthday dinner at Singing Sirloin , Marge is happy with the kids ' presents of French perfume from Bart and a macaroni and glue card of her as the Mona Lisa from Lisa . However , she is deeply offended by Homer 's gift as it is another demonstration of his thoughtless gift giving history , and her sisters , Patty and Selma sit by smugly . To make matters worse , as he presents his ' gift ' , it falls out of his hands and squashes Marge 's birthday cake . Deeply resentful with Homer for ruining her birthday again , Marge reminds him that not only has she never gone bowling in her life , but the ball is also inscribed with his name on it .

Realizing that Homer only bought the ball so that he could use it himself , she is determined to learn how to bowl to spite him and heads to Barney 's Bowl @-@ a @-@ Rama . But Marge has trouble how to until she meets a French bowling instructor named Jacques , who offers to give her lessons . Jacques proves to be a patient and charming instructor - the opposite of Homer in every way . When he asks about the name inscribed on her ball , she tells him that Homer is actually the ball 's name , neglecting to mention that she is married . Homer is faintly aware that something is wrong , but is unsure what is happening . After having passed several bowling lessons , Jacques and Marge agree to meet each other for brunch .

Their brunch goes well until they run into Helen Lovejoy , who seems delighted to not find Marge with Homer . After deflecting Helen 's interest by pretending to discuss bowling theory , Jacques asks Marge to meet him the next day away from the gossips of the world at his apartment , causing Marge to faint . In her dream , she imagines a romantic fantasy where she dances with Jacques in his luxurious , bowling @-@ themed apartment . When she comes to , she accepts the invitation .

At home , Homer finds the personalized bowling glove given to Marge by Jacques and realizes he may be losing her . It is not long until Bart realizes that Lisa 's suspicions are proving to be true about their parents drifting apart and offers Homer some advice in keeping his mouth shut so it does not get worse . At work the next day , he cannot bring himself to eat the sandwich she made for him , saying that it is all he has left of her . Marge leaves for her meeting with Jacques , but finds herself reminded of lifetime commitment throughout the drive . She comes to a fork in the road , one way leading to the nuclear plant , the other to Jacques ' apartment . After an agonized hesitation at the crux of the decision , she surprises Homer at the plant and kisses him warmly . An ecstatic Homer abandons his work post to carry Marge away in his arms . His co @-@ workers want to know what to tell the boss . To the sound of their cheers , he says to say that they are going to the backseat of his car and will not be back for ten minutes .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by David Silverman . When the episode was originally planned , it called for Albert Brooks to voice " Björn " , a Swedish tennis

instructor , but Brooks thought it would be funnier to make the character French and so the change was made . The title was originally to be " Bjorn to Be Wild " , thus accounting for the episode 's alternate title " Jacques to Be Wild " . Brooks improvised almost all of his dialogue , producing over three hours of material . Marge 's laugh during her bowling lesson was an ad @-@ libbed , natural laugh by Julie Kavner , who was laughing at something Albert Brooks has just said . The line " four onion rings ! " was one of the many lines that Brooks ad @-@ libbed and when saying it , Jacques loses his French accent . An extended audio clip of Albert Brooks ' unused dialogue was made available on Disc Three of The Simpsons The Complete First Season DVD .

The episode features the first appearance of the bowling alley Barney 's Bowlarama . The original backstory for Barney 's Bowlarama was that it was owned by Barney Gumble . Over time it changed to Barney just being an employee , as the writers could not imagine Barney owning anything . It was later revealed that Barney 's uncle was the owner . The exterior of the Bowlarama was designed by No Doubt member Eric Stefani . The episode also marks the first appearances of Lenny Leonard and Helen Lovejoy .

The sequence in which the family throws the pizza box away was specifically designed by John Swartzwelder to look surreal , with the family panning into each other . The moon was designed to resemble a bowling ball in the scene in which Jacques drops Marge home . The restaurant that Jacques and Marge attend is called " Shorty 's " ; it was originally intended that a chef 's hat would be shown moving around in the background , implying that the owner was short , but the concept was dropped as it seemed to be too much of a silly idea . The episode 's conclusion is a reference to An Officer and a Gentleman , which David Silverman had to watch first , so that he knew how to set the scene out . Homer 's line , " too exciting " , when he sees the lingerie store was written by James L. Brooks . During Marge 's phone conversation with Patty and Selma , Maggie can be seen sucking her pacifier repeatedly , a concept dropped in later episodes as it was deemed too much of a distraction from the dialogue .

= = Cultural references = =

Marge 's dream resembles a dance number from The Gay Divorcee . The end scene , in which Marge walks into the power plant , and Homer carries her away , is a reference to the film An Officer and a Gentleman , and features the same music , " Up Where We Belong " .

The title is taken from the song form the Eagles song " Life in the Fast Lane " .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Life on the Fast Lane " finished 11th in ratings for the week of March 12 ? 19 , 1990 , with a Nielsen rating of 17 @.@ 5 , equivalent to approximately 16 @.@ 1 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , beating Married ... with Children . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , called it " A very good , very assured episode that has seen some viewers (particularly female ones) tearing out their hair at the conclusion . " Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club praised the episode , stating : " There would be many funnier and faster episodes of The Simpsons but few can match " Life on the Fast Lane " for emotional depth and characterization . " IGN.com named Albert Brooks ' guest performance in this episode , along with his four other appearances , the best guest appearance in the show 's history . In a DVD review of the first season David B. Grelck gave the episode a rating of 4 / 5 , placing it as , along with " Homer 's Night Out " , his favorite of the season . Colin Jacobson at DVD Movie Guide said in a review that it was " another good but not great episode " and added that " Albert Brooks seriously enlivened " Life [on the Fast Lane] " ... Jacques becomes funny not so much due to the lines themselves ; it ? s Brooks ? readings that make them work . " Another DVD review from The Digital Bits called it " one of the first season 's best loved episodes " .

This episode won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (For Programming One

Hour or Less) in 1990 , defeating fellow Simpsons episode " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , and becoming the first The Simpsons episode to win the award . In a 2000 Entertainment Weekly article , Matt Groening ranked this episode as his second favorite episode of all time , behind " Bart the Daredevil " . Entertainment Weekly placed the episode twenty @-@ first on their top 25 The Simpsons episode list , calling it " a showcase for the series ' bedrock of character and heart . " The Orlando Sentinel 's Gregory Hardy named it the fifteenth best episode of the show with a sports theme . The episode 's reference to An Officer and a Gentleman was named the 23rd greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .

= = = Legacy = = =

The March 15 , 2004 edition of the Dear Abby column was pulled , as it had emerged that one of the letters was a fake . A newspaper editor noticed that the problem cited in the letter was identical to the plot of " Life on the Fast Lane " . Kathie Kerr , a spokeswoman for the Universal Press Syndicate stated that " It did sound too similar not to be a hoax " .