

= Stark Raving Dad =

" Stark Raving Dad " is the first episode of the third season of American animated television series The Simpsons . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 19 , 1991 . In the episode , main character Homer Simpson is mistaken for a " free @-@ thinking anarchist " and sent to a mental institution , where he shares a room with a large white man named Leon Kompowsky who pretends to be American pop star Michael Jackson . Meanwhile , because he normally forgets her birthday , Bart promises his sister Lisa that he will get her the best present ever .

Al Jean and Mike Reiss wrote the episode while Rich Moore served as director . Michael Jackson guest @-@ starred in the episode as the speaking voice of Leon Kompowsky . For contractual reasons , he was credited as John Jay Smith in the closing credits , and his role in the episode was not officially confirmed until later . Jackson was a fan of the show and called creator Matt Groening one night offering to do a guest spot . Jackson pitched several story ideas for the episode and wrote the song " Happy Birthday Lisa " that is featured in the plot . He also stipulated that he would provide Kompowsky 's speaking voice , but his singing voice would be performed by a sound @-@ alike ( Kipp Lennon ) because he wanted to play a joke on his brothers . The episode contains references to many aspects of Jackson 's career , with Kompowsky singing portions of the songs " Billie Jean " and " Ben " .

" Stark Raving Dad " received generally positive reviews from critics , particularly for the writing and Jackson 's performance . A sequel to the episode was later written , in which Kompowsky was to be voiced by Prince rather than Jackson , but it was never produced . During the January 30 , 1992 , rerun of the episode , a short alternate opening aired before the credits ; the opening was in response to a speech made by President George Bush three days earlier , in which he said Americans needed to be " a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons " .

= = Plot = =

Lisa wakes up Bart to remind him that her birthday is nearing , and that he forgets it every year . Bart promises to get her a present this year . Meanwhile , Homer discovers that all of his white shirts have turned pink because Bart put his red hat in with the laundry . Homer has no choice but to wear a pink shirt to work and as a result , his co @-@ workers poke fun at him . Mr. Burns suspects him of being a " free @-@ thinking anarchist " . Homer is sent home with a 20 @-@ question psychiatric quiz that he has to fill in so that Dr. Marvin Monroe can assess his sanity . Homer is too lazy to finish the quiz on his own and lets Bart fill it in . When Dr. Monroe sees the results , he determines that Homer is insane . Homer is sent to a mental institution , and is put in a cell with a large white man who seems to believe he is Michael Jackson ( referred to as " the big white guy who thinks he 's the little black guy " ) , and who introduces himself as such . Apparently , somehow never having heard of Michael Jackson , Homer believes him and quickly befriends him .

Marge , upon hearing what has happened , comes to the institution and is able to convince Homer 's doctors that he is not insane . Homer bids farewell to Michael , who reveals that he is only in the mental institution voluntarily . Homer decides to let him stay in the family home . He calls and tells Bart that he is bringing Michael to stay for a few days . Against Homer and Michael 's wishes , Bart tells his friend Milhouse and soon all of Springfield turns up outside of the Simpson family 's home to see Michael . The level of excitement is deflated when Homer introduces Michael and they realize he is an impostor . The townspeople become angry at Bart and leave . At the same time , Lisa comes out of the house and is upset with Bart because he has yet again failed to acknowledge her birthday , because of his excitement over Michael Jackson 's arrival .

After overhearing Lisa write in a letter that she is disowning Bart as a brother , the faux Michael convinces Bart to let him help . Together they write and perform a song for Lisa 's birthday called " Happy Birthday Lisa " . Lisa is thrilled and hugs her brother , saying that he has given her the best present ever . Afterwards , Michael reveals that his real name is Leon Kompowsky , a bricklayer from Paterson , New Jersey . He explains that he had been very angry for most of his life , but found some peace in talking in Jackson 's voice because it made everyone around him happy . Leon bids

farewell to the Simpsons and walks off down the road , singing Lisa 's birthday song to himself in his normal voice .

= = Production = =

" Stark Raving Dad " was written specifically for Michael Jackson , a fan of the show , who had called Groening one night and offered to do a guest spot . The offer was accepted and a script was written by Al Jean and Mike Reiss , based on an idea pitched by James L. Brooks . Creator Matt Groening and co @-@ executive producer Sam Simon also contributed significantly to the writing of the episode . In an early version of the script , Homer decided to take his alcoholic friend Barney Gumble in for rehab , but while there Homer began acting crazily so the doctors assumed he was the one to be committed . It was later changed to Homer being hospitalized for wearing a pink shirt , an idea pitched by Brooks . Michael Jackson pitched several story ideas for the episode , such as Bart telling everyone in town that Michael Jackson was coming to his house . He also requested that there be a scene in which he and Bart wrote a song together and asked that a joke about Prince be changed to one about Elvis Presley .

According to Jean , Jackson would not commit to the episode until after a read @-@ through of the script was done . The read was held at Jackson 's manager Sandy Gallin 's house , and Dan Castellaneta ( who provides the voice for Homer ) was 30 minutes late . Jean recalls that " no one said a word , we just sat there waiting " . Following the read , Jackson stipulated his conditions : he would record his speaking parts but not receive credit , and his singing voice would be performed by a sound @-@ alike . Leon Kompowsky 's singing parts were performed by Kipp Lennon , because Jackson wanted to play a joke on his brothers and fool them into thinking the impersonator was him . Lennon recorded his lines at the same time as Jackson , who found the impersonations humorous . Jackson showed up for the recording session alone and did not use the special trailer that was set up for him . According to Jean , Jackson did record versions of the singing parts , and while there have been rumors that those parts were the ones used in the final episode , The Simpsons music editor Chris Ledesma has stated the Lennon versions were used . Kompowsky 's normal speaking voice , which is heard at the end of the episode , was recorded by cast member Hank Azaria . The episode originally was supposed to end with Kompowsky singing a portion of " Man in the Mirror " in his Michael Jackson voice as he walked down the road , but it was changed to him singing the beginning of " Happy Birthday Lisa " .

" Stark Raving Dad " was the final episode in the season two production run , but aired as the premiere of season three , over a year after it was completed . Michael Jackson was credited with pseudonym John Jay Smith in the closing credits . At the time , the producers of the show were legally prevented from confirming that Jackson guest starred , although many media sources assumed it was really him . Similarly , in season two , actor Dustin Hoffman had guest starred in the episode " Lisa 's Substitute " under the name " Sam Etic " . After " Stark Raving Dad " , the producers decided that if a celebrity wished to guest star on the show , they had to be willing to be credited under their real name .

Jackson was a fan of Bart , and in addition to doing a guest spot on the show , he wanted to give Bart a number one single . He therefore co @-@ wrote the song " Do the Bartman " , which was released as a single around the same time that the episode was produced . Jackson could not take credit for his work on the song due to contractual reasons . Jackson also wrote the song " Happy Birthday Lisa " , which was later included in the album Songs in the Key of Springfield . A version of the song was reportedly scheduled to be included on a bonus disk in the October 2001 special edition of Jackson 's 1991 album Dangerous . However , the bonus disk was eventually dropped from the release . Jackson died on June 25 , 2009 , and the Fox network re @-@ aired the episode on July 5 as a tribute to him . The producers had intended to air the episode on June 28 , 2009 , three days after Jackson 's death , but could not resolve issues with syndication rights in time . The music video for " Do the Bartman " was aired on that date instead . The producers screened the episode first , and the only change made , which was unrelated to Jackson , was the blurring of a phone number .

This was the first episode to broadcast in Dolby Surround .

= = = Alternate opening = = =

The January 30 , 1992 rerun of the episode featured a brief alternate opening , which was written in response to a comment made by the President of the United States , George Bush , three days earlier . The show had previously had a " feud " with the President 's wife Barbara Bush when , in the October 1 , 1990 edition of People , she called The Simpsons " the dumbest thing [ she ] had ever seen " . The writers decided to respond by privately sending a polite letter to Bush in which they posed as Marge Simpson . Bush immediately sent a reply in which she apologized . Later , on January 27 , 1992 , George Bush made a speech during his re @-@ election campaign which included the statement " we are going to keep on trying to strengthen the American family , to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons . "

The writers decided that they wanted to respond quickly like Barbara Bush had to them . However , each episode of The Simpsons takes more than six months to produce , so it is difficult for the show to comment on current events . The writers therefore decided to add a brief response to the next broadcast of The Simpsons , which was a rerun of " Stark Raving Dad " on January 30 . Nancy Cartwright , the voice of Bart , was quickly called in so she could record a line .

The broadcast included a new tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek opening . The scene begins in the Simpsons ' living room where the family is watching Bush 's speech . When Bush says " to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons " , Bart replies , " Hey , we 're just like the Waltons . We 're praying for an end to the Depression , too . " The opening is featured on the season four DVD boxset .

= = Unproduced sequel = =

A year after the episode aired , the writers decided to make a sequel where Leon Kompowsky returns , this time acting like the musician Prince . The script was written by freelance writers and polished by Conan O 'Brien . According to Reiss , the plot of the episode saw Kompowsky / Prince manage to get everyone in the town to " loosen up , become more flamboyant and become more sexually open " .

The script was sent to Prince who agreed to voice the character and sent back a page of notes about what he would be wearing in various scenes . The writers were confused when the notes did not correspond to the script and they discovered that Prince was referring to a script that had been written by someone else . Prince disliked the Simpsons writers ' script and demanded the other one be made into an episode , but the writers refused . The episode eventually fell through and never made it past written form . It became one of the few completed scripts never to be produced .

= = Cultural references = =

Like all episodes of The Simpsons , " Stark Raving Dad " features a variety of references to popular culture . As Bart fills out the 20 @-@ question psychiatry quiz , Homer watches America 's Funniest Home Videos where the three nominated clips are all violent . Many of the scenes in the mental institution are references to the film One Flew Over the Cuckoo 's Nest . Several of the characters at the institution are based on those in the film , such as Chief . Floyd from the film Rain Man also appears at the mental home . When Marge calls the institution , a muzak version of " Crazy " , sung by Patsy Cline , can be heard over the phone . In the shot of the crowd that awaits Michael Jackson 's arrival outside of the Simpson family 's home , a man is holding a " John 3 : 16 " sign in reference to Rollen Stewart , who was famous for holding a similar sign at sporting events .

Many aspects of Jackson 's career are referenced in the episode . Kompowsky mentions several things which made Jackson famous , including Motown 25 : Yesterday , Today , Forever , " Beat It " , and " Thriller " . He also sings portions of the songs " Billie Jean " and " Ben " and performs the moonwalk . When Homer starts mumbling in his sleep , Kompowsky tells his stuffed animal : "

Bubbles , it 's going to be a long night . " Bubbles is the name of Jackson 's chimpanzee . Kompowsky also says he was upset when " his " 1979 album Off the Wall only received one Grammy Award nomination ; the writers had read that the real Jackson was genuinely upset .

= = Reception = =

In its original airing on the Fox network , " Stark Raving Dad " acquired a 13 @.@ 9 Nielsen rating and 23 percent share of the audience . It was viewed in approximately 12 @.@ 8 million homes , finishing the week ranked 33rd . The episode finished second in its time slot behind the season premiere of The Cosby Show , which ranked eighth for the week with a 19 @.@ 7 rating and 31 percent share . The Simpsons was the second highest rated show on Fox the week it aired , behind Married ... with Children .

The episode has been generally well received , being praised by many critics for its writing . In a 2009 review for Slate , Josh Levin wrote that " The greatness of ' Stark Raving Dad ' has a lot more to do with The Simpsons ' writing staff than with Jackson 's voice @-@ over talents . The show 's scripters came up with a plot device far more ingenious than simply dropping the singer into Springfield . " Monica Collins of the Boston Herald also enjoyed the episode . On the day it first aired , she wrote that " This episode is vintage Simpsons , crammed with divinely vulgar visual oddities . And Michael Jackson , of course , is just so weird anyway that he fits right in . " Mark Lorando of The Times @-@ Picayune commented that " throwaway lines on The Simpsons are funnier than the big punchlines on most so @-@ called comedy series ; [ this episode ] has layers of humor , satirical touches that enrich the story lines , " singling out jokes like the America 's Funniest Home Video parody . " The laughs are literally non @-@ stop , and Jackson 's unmistakable vocal presence [ ... ] adds a thousand watts of star power . " In 2011 , Television Blend 's Eric Eisenberg named " Stark Raving Dad " the best episode of the entire series . He praised it for being heartfelt and stated that what " prevents the episode from seeming artificial or manipulative is that the writing in the episode earns the earnest moments " , and further elaborates that while " strong emotions might be the hallmark of ' Stark Raving Dad , ' it would be a sincere mistake to ignore how funny it is . " He concluded that the episode " is perfectly constructed , is filled with both deep belly laughs and tears , and is simply the greatest episode of The Simpsons "

In a DVD audio commentary , writer Mike Reiss said he felt that Michael Jackson is " not a terrific actor [ ... ] but he did fine . He was really nice , he was a great sport . " In 2006 , Jackson was named the fifth @-@ best Simpsons guest star by IGN . Tom Ganjamie of Best Week Ever called Jackson 's guest appearance the " cleverest [ ... ] ever on The Simpsons " . Writing for IGN , Robert Canning said in a 2009 review that " Stark Raving Dad " is a " solid , funny and touching episode " and described Jackson 's performance as " heartfelt yet self @-@ parodying " . In a 2011 article , Andrew Martin of Prefix Mag named Michael Jackson his second favorite musical guest on The Simpsons out of a list of ten .

In 2003 , DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson commented that the episode was a good start to season three , but it " gets sappy on more than a few occasions , and it lacks the acerbic bite of the series ' best shows . Nonetheless , it tosses out some good laughs , and the guest appearance by Jackson ? under a pseudonym ? works well ; Michael shows an ability to mock himself that still surprises me . " In a 2004 review for Digitally Obsessed , Nate Meyers wrote that " there are many funny gags in this episode , especially in the first act when Homer gets a tour of the [ mental ] hospital . Some clever references are made to One Flew Over the Cuckoo 's Nest , but the second half of the episode is not especially funny . The jokes seem forced and there is too much of an effort to sentimentalize the relationship between Bart and Lisa , causing the show to lose its narrative drive . " In 2007 , Ben Rayner of the Toronto Star listed " Stark Raving Dad " as one of the three worst episodes of The Simpsons .

In a 2009 article for TV Squad , Mike Moody said the episode 's " sweetest moment " is at the end when Kompowsky and Bart perform the birthday song for Lisa . Likewise , writer Al Jean listed that scene as one of his five favorite moments from The Simpsons in 2003 . The reaction to the song " Happy Birthday Lisa " was mixed . Ben Rayner called it a " crap tune " , and Chris Selley of Maclean

's magazine wrote that " Stark Raving Dad " is " an unbearably sappy episode , and that birthday song for Lisa is just ... bad . " Dave Walker of The Times @-@ Picayune , however , listed the episode as one of Jackson 's " many memorable TV moments " and called the song " unforgettable " .