

= Beyond Blunderdome =

" Beyond Blunderdome " is the eleventh season premiere of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 26 , 1999 , and was watched in around 8 @. @ 1 million homes during the broadcast . In the episode , the Simpsons are given free tickets to a preview screening of Mel Gibson 's new film , a remake of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington . Gibson laments his current non @-@ violent role and wants someone to give him criticism . When Homer sees Gibson talking with Marge , he gives him a brutal review , leading Gibson to believe that Homer is the only man brave enough to give suggestions . As a result , he hires him to create a better ending . However , when the ending proves to be too controversial , Gibson and Homer end up on the run from studio executives with the film .

The episode was written by then @-@ showrunner Mike Scully and directed by Steven Dean Moore . The story was a parody of the film industry and its practice with test screenings and overly violent films . It featured several references to various films as well as other popular culture . Gibson guest starred as himself , and Jack Burns voiced a film studio executive named Edward Christian .

Since airing , the episode has received generally mixed reviews from critics , but Gibson was praised for his performance . It was released on the DVD collection The Simpsons Film Festival in 2002 , and The Simpsons ? The Complete Eleventh Season in 2008 .

= = Plot = =

Homer test drives a new electric car so he can get a free gift . After destroying the car by driving into an ocean due to Homer thinking it is the same as an amphibious vehicle , the family returns to the dealer to receive the gift , which Homer forgets to open until he is in bed with Marge . It turns out to be free tickets to a preview screening of a new Mel Gibson film , a remake of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington , which makes Homer jealous as Marge expresses an attraction to Gibson . The audience members are given comment cards to fill and the filmmakers can change the film based on their reactions . The film is enjoyed by everyone but Homer , who only likes comedy or action movies . During the screening , Gibson , having come to the test screening unannounced due to being worried that the audience won 't like him playing a dramatic role , is assured by the producers that the film is wonderful . When Gibson flirts with Marge after the showing , Homer writes a negative review of the film . While reading the mostly positive comment cards after the movie , Gibson is certain that everyone loves him too much to tell him how to improve the film , but when he reads Homer 's comments , he is convinced that Homer was the only person brave enough to tell him the truth .

Gibson shows up at the Simpsons ' door and invites Homer and his family to come with him to Hollywood to change the film , while Homer thinks that he is out to take Marge from him . Homer and Gibson begin work on the film while the rest of the family explores Hollywood , where they encounter celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres , Eddie , the dog from Frasier , and also spot Robert Downey Jr in a shoot @-@ out with police . When Homer 's ideas prove to be stupid and pointless , including giving a random dog a close @-@ up of its eyes shifting back and forth to show that he is evil , Gibson begins to wonder whether he made a mistake . However , he is enthusiastic when Homer tells him his ideas for the famous " filibuster " scene at the end . The next day , they present the new ending to the producers . In the new version , Mr. Smith goes berserk and slaughters every member of the United States Congress and the President in a mindless action movie sequence . The producers are horrified at this , saying that the film was meant to be the studio 's prestige picture . They attempt to burn the film reel , but Homer and Gibson , determined to save their film , run away with it .

They meet up with the rest of the family at Hollywood memorabilia museum . They steal a replica of the main villain 's car from The Road Warrior and engage in a ludicrous car chase through the streets of Hollywood , with the film executives on their trail . They attempt to distract the producers by throwing the Mel Gibson mannequin that was occupying the car at the producers , with Mel switching to his old Mad Max costume in the process , but this only works temporarily . Homer ,

taking an idea he believes to be from Braveheart , moons the executives along with Gibson so that they will stop their car out of disgust , but this fails and Homer 's buttocks is caught in the car 's hood . Homer and Gibson then attend the film 's premiere back in Springfield , but the entire audience walks out disgusted by the new ending , and the two men are even threatened with legal action from Jimmy Stewart 's granddaughter . Homer then tries to apologize to Gibson , but he does not blame him , arriving to the conclusion there is no place for violence @-@ lovers like them in Hollywood ; however , as soon as Homer suggests more nonsensical film ideas , Gibson kicks him out of his limousine and he lies on the ground shouting towards him that he fell out . The episode ends with a random dog given a close up of his eyes shifting back and forth .

= = Production and themes = =

" Beyond Blunderdome " was written by then @-@ showrunner Mike Scully and directed by Steven Dean Moore , airing as part of the eleventh season of The Simpsons (1999 ? 2000) . It was Scully 's first writing credit since he took over as showrunner for the show . In comparison with other episode scripts , the staff writers did not change much of the original writing . The plot revolves around Mel Gibson doing a remake of the 1939 film Mr. Smith Goes to Washington . Karma Waltonen and Denise Du Vernay analysed the episode and wrote in the book The Simpsons in the Classroom : Embiggening the Learning Experience with the Wisdom of Springfield that " the episode is able to critique the practice of test screening , violence in film , and one of movies ' favorite standards ? the car chase " , calling it " a ridiculous parody of an action @-@ film violence orgy " . Staff writer Tom Gammill came up with the idea for the violent version of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington , and Gibson throwing his Senator badge away at the end of the film , is a reference to the ending of the film Dirty Harry from 1971 . The idea for the set piece with electric cars at the beginning of the episode came from Kevin Nealon , who was a friend of former showrunner David Mirkin . One day , he came by and demonstrated his electric car for the writing staff .

The episode featured Mel Gibson as a guest voice . Scully had previously met him while writing jokes for a school fundraiser along with his wife Julie Thacker . Gibson and Daniel Stern were the hosts and needed jokes for the event . It turned out that Gibson was a fan of the show and watched it with his children . With that knowledge , it did not take Scully long to invite him to do a part . Gibson was willing to do the job and even came in on three separate occasions to do retakes ? mostly because he knew his children would be watching . Unlike most guest voices , Gibson recorded the show along with the cast . On one occasion , it turned out that a joke written for Gibson actually did happen in real life . The writing staff wanted Gibson to say that he would urinate behind a dumpster , because it sounded like it would not be a classy thing to do for a movie star . He had , however , already done that during a couple of film premieres because he can feel trapped in a public toilet with a lot of fans . Gibson was surprised the writers knew about the story , but it turned out to be a coincidence . Otherwise , the episode frequently references films Gibson appeared in . After the studio cart crashes , Gibson says to Homer , " I 'm getting too old for this crap , " a reference to a line said by Danny Glover 's character Roger Murtaugh to Gibson 's character Martin Riggs in the Lethal Weapon film series . A poster for his film Braveheart is on the wall in the editing room and the Road Warrior car from the 1981 film Mad Max 2 is also featured . In addition to Gibson , Jack Burns guest starred in the episode , voicing a film studio executive named Edward Christian . His frequent use of the terms " Huh ? " and " You know what I mean ? " is a reference to a comedy routine performed by Burns and Avery Schreiber .

= = Cultural references = =

In the episode , there are many references to popular culture . The character Rainier Wolfcastle is seen filming Saving Irene Ryan , which is a reference to the 1998 film Saving Private Ryan and actress Irene Ryan from the sitcom The Beverly Hillbillies . Homer says , " you had me at ' hello ' , " a quote from the film Jerry Maguire (1996) , when Gibson asks for his help on his film . The airport is called " George Kennedy Airport " , which is a reference to actor George Kennedy , and his role in

the film *Airport* (1970) and its three sequels ; *Airport 1975* (1974) , *Airport ' 77* (1977) , and *The Concorde ... Airport ' 79* (1979) . When Homer and Gibson are being hunted by the executives they enter a car museum . The museum features the Batmobile from the television series *Batman* , General Lee from the series *The Dukes of Hazzard* , *Herbie the Love Bug* from the 1968 film *The Love Bug* and later films , the Monkeemobile from the series *The Monkees* , the Munster Koach from the series *The Munsters* , and the car from the series *The Flintstones* .

= = Release and reception = =

The episode originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 26 , 1999 , as the premiere of the eleventh season of *The Simpsons* . In its original broadcast , " *Beyond Blunderdome* " finished 48th in the ratings for the week of September 20 ? 26 , 1999 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 0 ? equivalent to approximately 8 @. @ 1 million viewing households . It was the highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network that week , beating shows such as *Futurama* and *King of the Hill* . In comparison , the previous season premiere episode , " *Lard of the Dance* " , drew a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 2 points with 7 @. @ 1 million households watching . The episode had a lower rating than the overall rating for the entire eleventh season , which averaged 8 @. @ 2 million households . On March 12 , 2002 , the episode was released in the United States on a DVD collection titled *The Simpsons Film Festival* , along with the season four episode " *Itchy & Scratchy : The Movie* " , the season seven episode " *22 Short Films About Springfield* " , and the season six episode " *A Star is Burns* " . On October 7 , 2008 , " *Beyond Blunderdome* " was released on DVD as part of the box set *The Simpsons ? The Complete Eleventh Season* . Staff members Mike Scully , George Meyer , Ron Hauge , Matt Selmán , and Steven Dean Moore participated in the DVD audio commentary for the episode . The episode had an alternate ending in which Apu suggests that they sell the failed film to India , since the people of India love violent , action @- @ packed American films . This ending was included on the eleventh season DVD set .

Since airing , the episode has received generally mixed reception from critics . The day after the premiere , Mark Lorrando of *The Times @- @ Picayune* wrote that while it was " not the laugh riot *The Simpsons* have spoiled us to expect ? our appetite for showbiz parodies is waning ? the episode did have its moments . " He further added that he especially liked " the sign posted outside the movie studio gate : ' No Artistic Integrity Beyond This Point . ' " While reviewing the eleventh season of *The Simpsons* , DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson commented on the episode , writing that " Gibson actually does a good job here , and it ? s amusing to see Homer ? s terrible movie ideas . This isn ? t classic *Simpsons* , but it starts the season on a pretty good note . " However , an article in *Salon* magazine from 2000 points to " *Beyond Blunderdome* " as the greatest precursor to that Homer would be more predominant as ? *Jerkass Homer* ? in the Scully era as showrunner , a Homer who " is not only dumb , but [has also become] disgusting and semi @- @ sociopathic . This is the Homer who , in the season opener [' *Beyond Blunderdome* '] , showed Marge 's wedding ring to Mel Gibson and stated , ' This is a symbol that as per our marriage , she 's my property and I own her . ' " Gibson 's performance has generally been praised . Simon Crerar of *The Times* listed his performance as one of the thirty @- @ three funniest cameos in the history of the show . Similarly , *Total Film* 's Nathan Dittum ranked Gibson 's performance as the seventh best guest appearance in the show 's history in a list of twenty people , calling it " Another ace self @- @ effacing appearance from a Hollywood high @- @ flyer " .