

= Summer of 4 Ft . 2 =

" Summer of 4 Ft . 2 " is the twenty @-@ fifth and last episode of The Simpsons ' seventh season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 19 , 1996 . In the episode , the Simpson family goes to Ned Flanders family 's beach house . Hanging around with a new set of children , Lisa becomes popular , while Bart is left out . Bart tries to sabotage his sister 's newfound acceptance , but fails .

The episode was written by Dan Greaney and directed by Mark Kirkland . The episode guest stars Christina Ricci , who recorded her lines over the phone instead of going into the studio . The Simpson family 's rented beach house is based on the then @-@ show runner Josh Weinstein 's parents ' house in New Hampshire . The episode features cultural references to Pippi Longstocking , The New Yorker character Eustace Tilley , and Alice and The Hatter from Alice 's Adventures in Wonderland . Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from fans and television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 8 , and was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week .

= = Plot = =

Lisa finds out on the last day of school how unpopular she is when nobody cares enough to sign her yearbook , while Bart makes people feel grateful that he signs theirs . Meanwhile , Ned Flanders offers the Simpson family the use of his beach house in Little Pwagmattasquarmsettport over the summer , though Homer makes Ned work on his faulty septic tank before he agrees . Marge likes the idea and suggests that Bart should bring Milhouse and that Lisa should bring a friend too . However , Lisa has no friends to bring and decides to change her image as a result , deliberately leaving behind her un @-@ stylish wardrobe . After reaching the beach house , Lisa lies to Marge that she forgot to pack , so they go shopping for new clothes . Lisa buys a new set of clothes that she believes will make her look " cool " , and goes to look for some likeminded people her own age . Marge , now feeling left out , decides to focus her parenting on Maggie , who looks worried . Homer , in the meantime , buys a large firework to celebrate Independence Day , only for it to backfire due to a fast @-@ burning fuse ; he initially throws it in the fridge , but changes his mind when he remembers the beer inside and instead chucks it in the dishwasher , causing it to rupture a pipe .

When Lisa succeeds in making friends with a group of local children (in particular a girl named Erin) , Bart becomes jealous and complains that they should be his friends . He tries to steal her new friends from her with a skateboarding display , but they find his effort pathetic and shun him , which Bart blames on Milhouse . Lisa is then spending more time with her new friends , to the point where they hold a beach party to celebrate the 4th of July . Bart then decides to take revenge by showing her friends the yearbook and all of Lisa 's deeply nerdy real pastimes . As her new friends stare in shock at Lisa 's nerdy hobbies , Lisa runs off in tears .

The next morning , Lisa is furious with Bart for exposing her true self . She is about to pour maple syrup in Bart 's eyes when Marge tells them about a carnival happening later that evening . They all go , but Bart and Lisa continue to bicker and fight , right up to when they ride the bumper cars and Bart rams Lisa 's car out of the arena . Feeling dejected , Lisa decides to leave , concluding that she was probably never meant to have friends , and Bart feels guilty for hurting Lisa . When Lisa returns to the beach house , she finds her friends in the act of seemingly vandalizing the Simpsons ' car . Thinking it 's some sort of cruel prank , she simply tells them to finish it and leave , but it 's then revealed they were actually decorating the car with sea shells in her honor , at which point they tell her they don 't care that she 's smart because she 's a good person and they learned stuff from her . Lisa is thrilled , but Homer shows up and screams in horror at how his car got messed up . Before leaving Bart presents Lisa with her yearbook , which now has wonderful messages from her new friends and even Milhouse . He reveals he felt guilty for hurting her , so he explained his behavior to her new friends and asked them to sign her yearbook . Lisa forgives Bart , while Marge tells Homer that the kids should 've cleaned out the shells before gluing them to the car , as the Simpsons are followed by seagulls trying to eat the mollusks inside .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Dan Greaney , and directed by Mark Kirkland . It was Greaney 's second episode on The Simpsons . The staff of the show wanted to do a summer episode because there was " so much stuff " about summer vacations that they felt had to be covered in an episode . David Silverman , one of the show 's animators , particularly likes the episode because he thinks it captures the feel of being on summer vacation .

The area in which the Flanders family 's beach house is located in is based on the Cape Cod peninsula . Many of the writers of The Simpsons spent time on Cape Cod so they decided to model the new locations on it . The animators looked at Cape Cod photographs to get inspiration for the episode , and one of the show 's background designers , Lance Wilder , grew up in that area . The beach house is based on the then @-@ show runner Josh Weinstein 's parents ' house in New Hampshire , to which the writers had paid visit many times . They played several board games when they were there , which gave them the idea to have to the Simpson family play the Mystery Date board game in the episode . Silverman said that the episode was difficult to animate and direct because it had so many new and detailed backgrounds and completely different locations .

American actress Christina Ricci guest starred in the episode as Erin , one of Lisa 's new friends . Ricci was not able to come to the recording studio , so she recorded all of her lines over the phone . Weinstein , who was a fan of Ricci , thought she did a nice performance in the episode .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode 's title is a parody of the 1971 film Summer of ' 42 . Lisa has a daydream in which the following fictional characters appear : Pippi Longstocking , The New Yorker character Eustace Tilley , and Alice and The Hatter from Alice 's Adventures in Wonderland . Milhouse compares Lisa 's new appearance to the character Blossom from the American television series Blossom . TeeJay 's ZayMart is a spoof of defunct retailer Zayre and parent company T.J. Maxx . Homer replicates a scene from the 1973 film American Graffiti when he buys some embarrassing products at the store in order to get some illegal fireworks . The Mystery Date board game that the family is forced to play is an actual Milton Bradley Company board game from the 1960s . Weinstein recalled playing it as a child and claim it to be " a very disappointing game to play as a little boy " because of the female target audience . The ending music of American Graffiti , " All Summer Long " by The Beach Boys , is also played at the end of the episode .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Summer of 4 Ft . 2 " finished forty @-@ second (tied with Melrose Place and Married ... with Children) in the ratings for the week of May 13 to May 19 , 1996 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 8 . The episode was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week (tied with Melrose Place and Married ... With Children) , following The X @-@ Files .

Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from fans and television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , wrote : " This episode will strike a chord with anyone that 's ever tried to fit in with the crowd [...] Lisa gets to show the many facets of her character , and there 's a superb slapstick sequence as Homer tries to dispose of a firework . " Dave Foster of DVD Times praised the episode and said : " The episode is quite simply my favourite Lisa episode regardless of season . From calm to cool and fiercely aggressive , we 've rarely seen Lisa so enticing as we do here , and the episode 's many elements including the side stories for the other family members culminate in one of the finest this season has to offer . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson enjoyed the episode and said that he likes how it addresses Bart 's resentment of Lisa 's popularity . " Granted , it makes [Bart] a little too mean , but it 's entertaining , " he added . Jacobson went on

to say : " Marge gets the best moment again , as I love watching her non @-@ violent approach to the bumper cars . " Jennifer Malkowski of DVD Verdict considered the best parts of the episode to be the scenes that feature Milhouse , particularly his yearbook message to Lisa and the scene with the Mystery Date board game . She concluded her review by giving the episode a grade of A.