

= Homer 's Barbershop Quartet =

" Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " is the first episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 30 , 1993 . The episode was written by Jeff Martin and directed by Mark Kirkland . It features The Be Sharps , a barbershop quartet founded by Homer Simpson . The band 's story roughly parallels that of The Beatles . George Harrison and David Crosby guest star as themselves , and The Dapper Dans provide the singing voices of The Be Sharps .

The episode begins with the Simpson family as they attend a swap meet . There , Bart Simpson and his sister Lisa notice a picture of their father , Homer , on the cover of an old LP album . Homer explains to his family that he , Principal Skinner , Barney Gumble , and Apu Nahasapeemahpetilon recorded a barbershop quartet album in 1985 , which catapulted them to national fame . He narrates to his family the story of how the band formed , reached the pinnacle of success , and eventually folded . At the end of the episode , the group reunites to perform a concert on the roof of Moe 's Tavern , singing their number one hit " Baby on Board " .

Throughout the episode , several references are made to The Beatles and other popular culture icons . In its original American broadcast , " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " finished 30th in ratings , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 7 . It was praised for its The Beatles cameo , despite being a leftover episode from the previous season . Reviews that criticized the episode 's inconsistent humor blamed it on the change of writers before the episode 's creation .

= = Plot = =

At the Springfield Swap Meet , Bart and Lisa Simpson notice Homer on the cover of an LP album . Homer explains that he , Principal Skinner , Barney , and Apu recorded a barbershop quartet album in 1985 , which catapulted them to national fame . He then tells his family the story of how the album came to be . While performing at Moe 's Tavern , an agent offered to represent the group as a band , but only on the condition that they expel Chief Wiggum , who was the band 's fourth member at the time . After Homer abandons Wiggum in the woods , an audition is held during which the band rejected candidates to fill Wiggum 's position , among others Jasper Beardly , Groundskeeper Willie and Wiggum disguised as Doctor Dolittle , the trio returned downheartedly to Moe 's Tavern , where they recruited Barney after hearing him sing in a beautiful Irish tenor voice . The four members then brainstormed on a name for the group , eventually settling on The Be Sharps .

In the present , Homer brags that he sold his car 's spare tire at the swap meet . On the way home , one of their tires blows out . While Marge walks to a gas station to get a new tire , Homer continues his story . He tells Bart and Lisa that after Marge bought a Baby on board sign , Homer wrote a song inspired by the fad . The song " Baby on Board " appeared on the group 's first album , Meet The Be Sharps , and the song became a hit . The Be Sharps performed the song at the Statue of Liberty 's centennial in 1986 , and they later won a Grammy Award for Outstanding Soul , Spoken Word , or Barbershop Album of the Year for Meet The Be Sharps .

Back in the present , the Simpsons are at home , where Homer explains that The Be Sharps became so popular that they were featured on merchandise , including lunch boxes , mugs , and posters . The band later released their second album , Bigger than Jesus . While The Be Sharps grew in fame , creative disputes arose when Barney dated a Japanese conceptual artist (a parody of Yoko Ono) , which eventually led to his leaving the group . Barney and his girlfriend recorded a song in which his girlfriend repeatedly says " Number 8 " over tape loops of Barney 's belches (a parody of The Beatles ' " Revolution 9 ") . Ultimately , the group realized they were no longer popular . The latest issue of Us Weekly 's What 's Hot and What 's Not confirmed this , noting that the band was no longer " hot " . The band then split up ; Principal Skinner returned to the Springfield Elementary School , Apu to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , Barney back to Moe 's Tavern , and Homer to the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant , where his position has temporarily been filled by a chicken . Returning to the present day , the group reunites to perform a concert on the roof of Moe 's Tavern , singing their number one hit " Baby on Board " . Pedestrians stop and listen to them singing

their comeback concert , including George Harrison of The Beatles , who dismissively remarks , " It 's been done . "

= = Production = =

One of the writers for The Simpsons suggested that they should create an episode that focuses on Homer in a barbershop quartet and " a big parody of The Beatles " . The episode was written by Jeff Martin , who was an " obsessive " Beatles fan , making him " a natural to write [the episode] " . Mark Kirkland , a " huge " Beatles fan , directed the episode , and ensured that The Beatles references were accurate . Kirkland enjoyed directing the episode because unlike other episodes he directed , he did not experience any trouble animating " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " . The animators liked creating The Beatles gags and enjoyed the barbershop music . After the animators synchronized the audio track , music , and animation , they " just fell in love " with it . They also enjoyed working on the choreography of The Be Sharps and trying to match the characters ' movements with the music . They were inspired by The Beatles film Let It Be , including the shots of the band in the recording studio where they decide to break up . Kirkland did not think there was anything " spectacular " in the episode 's animation , but he and his animation team " just loved " working on it .

In a scene in the episode , Lisa sees a man selling an original Malibu Stacy doll from 1958 that has big , pointed breasts . The man , nicknamed " Wiseguy " by the show 's staff , tells Lisa that " they took [the doll] off the market after some kid put both his eyes out . " The joke received a censor note from the Fox network 's censors because they did not want such jokes on the show , but the producers ignored the note and the joke appeared in the episode when it aired .

The Be Sharps 's singing voices were provided by the four members of The Dapper Dans , a barbershop quartet that performs at Disneyland in Anaheim , California . Before working on the episode , Martin had seen one of the quartet 's performances and enjoyed it . When the episode 's production began , he contacted the quartet , and they agreed to make a guest appearance in the episode . The Dapper Dans 's singing was intermixed with the normal voice actors ' voices , often with a regular voice actor singing the melody and The Dapper Dans providing backup .

George Harrison guest stars in the episode as himself . He was the second Beatles member after Ringo Starr (in " Brush with Greatness ") to appear on The Simpsons . When Harrison arrived at the recording studio in West Los Angeles to record his lines , the casting director told the episode 's show runners , Al Jean and Mike Reiss , that Harrison was coming and that they were not allowed to tell anybody about it because it was intended to be a secret to the staff . Jean , Reiss , and the show 's creator Matt Groening went to see Harrison in the studio , and when they returned to the writer 's room , Groening said , " Guess who I just met ? George Harrison ! " , not knowing that it was supposed to be a secret . Harrison arrived at the studio by himself without any entourage or bodyguards . Groening recalls that Harrison was " pretty glum " , and he was unenthusiastic when the staff asked him questions about The Beatles . However , when Groening asked Harrison about the Wonderwall Music album , he suddenly " perked up " because it was one of his solo albums that he was rarely questioned on . Harrison 's guest appearance was one of Groening 's favorites because he was " super nice " and " very sweet " to the staff . Jean said it was a " huge thrill " to have him appear . David Crosby also makes a guest appearance in the episode as himself , and appears in the scene in which he presents a Grammy award to The Be Sharps .

" Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " was a hold @-@ over episode from the season four production line . It was chosen to air as the fifth season 's premiere episode because it guest starred Harrison . The Fox network executives wanted to premiere with Conan O 'Brien 's episode " Homer Goes to College " because of its parody of the 1978 comedy film National Lampoon 's Animal House , but the writers felt " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " would be a better choice because of Harrison 's involvement . The episode originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 30 , 1993 . It was included in a 2002 video collection of selected musical @-@ themed episodes titled The Simpsons : Backstage Pass . The episode was also included in The Simpsons season five DVD set , which was released on December 21 , 2004 .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode makes several references to The Beatles . Their first album , Meet the Be Sharps , is a parody of the Meet the Beatles album . Moe 's Tavern changes its name to Moe 's Cavern , a reference to the Cavern Club in Liverpool where The Beatles frequently performed in the early 1960s . Chief Wiggum , thrown out of the band because he was " too Village People " , mirrors Pete Best . Best was an early member of The Beatles but was replaced by Ringo Starr . The cover of Bigger Than Jesus , The Be Sharps ' second album , features the group walking on water , which is a direct parody of the art on The Beatles ' album Abbey Road . The name is a reference to a controversial quote made by John Lennon in 1966 . Bart references this by asking , " What did you do [to lose your popularity] ? Screw up like The Beatles and say you were bigger than Jesus ? " , to which Homer replies " All the time . That was the title of our second album . " At the end of the episode , the album 's back cover is revealed , on which Homer is seen turned away from the camera , as opposed to the rest of the band . This is a parody of the Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band LP reverse , in which Paul McCartney is in the same position . Barney 's Japanese conceptual artist girlfriend is a parody of Yoko Ono . Their song repeats the phrase " Number 8 " and a burp by Barney , a reference to The Beatles ' " Revolution 9 " . The group performing atop Moe 's Tavern at the end of the episode is a parody of The Beatles ' impromptu concert on the Apple Corps rooftop during their Get Back recording sessions in 1969 , hence George Harrison 's line , " It 's been done . " In addition , The Be Sharps are wearing the same outfits as The Beatles during the rooftop concert scene : Barney in a brown fur coat (John) , Homer in a bright red coat (Ringo) , Skinner in a black suit (Paul) , and Apu in a black Mongolian lamb coat with green trousers (George) . After the performance , Homer says , " I 'd like to thank you on behalf of the group and I hope we passed the audition " , paraphrasing a quote by John Lennon at the end of The Beatles rooftop performance .

At the swap meet , Mayor Quimby says " Ich bin ein Springfield Swap Meet Patron " , a parody of John F. Kennedy 's famous Cold War quote . Homer browses through a box with items that cost five cents each . These include the United States Declaration of Independence , a copy of Action Comics # 1 , a complete block of Inverted Jenny misprint postal stamps , and a Stradivarius violin . Principal Skinner tries on a prison mask with the number 24601 , notable as Jean Valjean 's prison number in Les Misérables . Homer buys Grampa a pink Cadillac , just as Elvis Presley did for his mother . One of the late night television shows Chief Wiggum watches is Johnny Carson doing his Carnac the Magnificent routine . Homer mentions that 1985 was the year that Joe Piscopo left the NBC sketch show Saturday Night Live . Moe sells oyster shells at the swap meet that resemble Lucille Ball . Homer begins telling the story of The Be Sharps by saying , " Rock and roll had become stagnant . ' Achy Breaky Heart ' was seven years away ; something had to fill the void . That something was barbershop . " At the Grammy ceremony , Spinal Tap , Michael Jackson (Leon Kompowsky) and George Harrison are all at the post awards reception and MC Hammer in the audience . While Bart and Lisa browse through LP albums at the swap meet , they find a recording of " Yankee Doodle " by Melvin and the Squirrels , a band that spoofs Alvin and the Chipmunks as well as a Spinal Tap album .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " finished 30th in the ratings for the week of September 27 to October 3 , 1993 , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 7 , translating to 11 @, @ 963 @, @ 400 households . Since airing , the episode received generally positive reviews . DVD Verdict gave the episode a Grade A score . DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson felt that the episode " kicks off [the season] with a terrific bang " . He appreciated the episode 's parodies of a mix of subjects , and its ability to bring them together into a coherent story . Noting that the episode focused on spoofing Beatlemania , Jacobson praised George Harrison 's cameo as " probably the best " Beatles cameo in the series . Giving the episode a score of 5 out of 5 , DVD Talk praised the "

four @-@ part harmony of hilarity [that] gets a flawless mop top modeling " , complimenting the references to pop culture icons as being " right on the money " . TV DVD Reviews commented on how the episode " hit all the right notes " , and was pleased with Harrison 's cameo . Despite the episode being a " leftover from last season " , The Washington Post still applauded the episode 's humor , saying , " Who cares ? It 's funny . " The Courier @-@ Mail found " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " an entertaining episode . Asserting that the series hit its peak with season five episodes such as " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " , the Sunday Tasmanian called the episode a " first @-@ class offering " . Although it appreciated the story and use of the main characters , Current Film was not enthused about the episode , claiming that it was not consistently funny . The Age called " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " an awful episode , with a " weak , unfunny parody of The Beatles " , blaming the series change of writers before the episode was written .

IGN ranked The Beatles ' appearances on The Simpsons series ? in episodes such as " Lisa the Vegetarian " , " Brush with Greatness " , and " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " ? 10th on their list of the Top 25 Simpsons Guest Appearances , and the Toronto Star ranked the band fifth on a list of the 11 best cameos on The Simpsons . Andrew Martin of Prefix Mag named George Harrison his fourth @-@ favorite musical guest on The Simpsons out of a list of ten .