

= Homer Alone =

" Homer Alone " is the fifteenth episode of The Simpsons ' third season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 6 , 1992 . In the episode , stress from doing housework and being underappreciated at home causes Marge to have a mental breakdown and she decides to go on a vacation . She leaves for a spa called Rancho Relaxo , putting Bart and Lisa into the care of her sisters Patty and Selma and leaving Maggie at home with Homer .

The episode was written by David M. Stern and directed by Mark Kirkland . Stern had noticed that most of the writers were pitching stories about Bart and Homer , and he thought a " deeper vein of comedy " could be reached by having Marge suffer from a nervous breakdown . Originally , Marge 's trip was to a distressed mother 's institute rather than a spa . However , the plot was not well received at the table read for the episode and much of it was re @-@ written . The episode 's title references the film Home Alone which starred David Stern 's brother Daniel .

" Homer Alone " contains references to the Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner cartoons , Thelma and Louise , Home Alone , MacGyver , and the song " Baby Come Back " by Player . The episode has received generally positive reviews from critics . During its original airing on the Fox network during February sweeps , it acquired a 14 @.@ 2 Nielsen rating . The episode aired two days before the opening ceremony of the 1992 Winter Olympics .

= = Plot = =

One day , Marge becomes stressed from all of the chores she does for her family . The day is particularly stressful as she must run several errands . While driving over a bridge , she listens to the radio and hears the DJs make a cruel prank call to a man . She suddenly snaps after Maggie accidentally bursts open her bottle and floods the car with milk and parks her car in the middle of the bridge , blocking traffic . The police try to convince her to move her car , to no avail . Finally , Homer arrives and convinces her to get out of the car , and she is promptly arrested by the police . Many women sympathize with Marge 's plight , and Mayor Quimby , hoping to gain popularity , orders her release .

That night , Marge decides to unwind by taking a vacation to a spa called Rancho Relaxo . She goes alone , putting Bart and Lisa into the care of her sisters Patty and Selma and leaving Maggie at home with Homer . Marge enjoys her much @-@ needed rest while the rest of the family have difficulty adapting to life without her . Homer finds that he is lonely , and not adept at taking care of Maggie . Bart and Lisa have a hard time adjusting to life with their aunts .

Maggie , upset about her mother 's absence , makes her way out of the house looking for Marge and goes missing . After a long search by Homer and Barney , Homer calls a baby search hotline . Meanwhile , Marge has done everything she wanted to do in her vacation and calls Homer to tell him she is coming back and he should pick her up at the train station . Maggie is found on the edge of the top of an ice @-@ cream shop and is returned to Homer just in time for Marge 's arrival . That night , Marge tells Homer and the kids , who are all sleeping next to her , that she would like more help around the house ; they assure her she has nothing to worry about .

= = Production = =

" Homer Alone " was written by David M. Stern . He had noticed that most of the writers were pitching stories about Bart and Homer , and he thought a " deeper vein of comedy " could be reached by having Marge suffer from a nervous breakdown . Executive producer James L. Brooks immediately approved the idea . Originally , Marge 's trip was to a distressed mother 's institute so they could show " what made Marge tick . " However , the plot was not well received at the table read for the episode .

The writers then re @-@ wrote much of the episode , switching the institute to a spa . They also added a video appearance from the fictional actor Troy McClure , voiced by Phil Hartman . According to executive producer Al Jean , the writers often used McClure as a " panic button " when

they felt an episode needed more humor . The episode 's title is a play on the 1990 film Home Alone ; David Stern 's brother Daniel had starred in the movie as one of the main antagonists .

The episode was directed by Mark Kirkland . The scene at the train station where Marge leaves for Rancho Relaxo includes a brief cameo appearance of a character modeled after Simpsons director Jim Reardon . Reardon dislikes flying , and took trains whenever possible , so the animators always tried to include him in scenes at a train station . Susie Dietter served as assistant director for the episode and animated several of the scenes for the subplot with Bart , Lisa , Patty and Selma . In a scene where Homer sings a song to Maggie , he was designed to look dishevelled because the writers had wanted him to look drunk , although no attention was called to it .

= = Cultural references = =

The beginning of the episode where Homer chases Bart is a reference to the Warner Bros. / Chuck Jones Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner cartoons . The scene freezes , during which Bart and Homer 's scientific names are given as Brat 'us Don 'thaveacow 'us and Homo Neanderthal 'us respectively . The background in the sequence references the Hanna ? Barbera tradition of using backgrounds over and over and making it look like there is an " endless living room . " The scene where Marge is booked in prison references the Coen brothers film Raising Arizona .

The song that plays while Homer is on hold on the missing child hotline is " Baby Come Back " by Player . One of the films available at Rancho Relaxo is Thelma and Louise , which Marge ends up watching . " Homer Alone " is the first episode of The Simpsons that shows Patty and Selma 's fondness for MacGyver , and Selma says " Richard Dean Anderson will be in my dreams tonight . "

= = Reception = =

In its original airing on February 6 , 1992 on the Fox network during February sweeps , the episode acquired a 14 @. @ 2 Nielsen rating and was viewed in approximately 13 @. @ 08 million homes . It finished 25th in the ratings for the week of February 3 ? 9 , 1992 , up from the season 's average rank of 37th . The Simpsons was the highest rated show on Fox that week .

Since airing , the episode has received generally positive reviews from 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 , " After the first few minutes , this episode becomes less about Marge than the family 's reliance on her . Bart and Lisa 's torturous time at Patty and Selma 's is wonderful [ ... ] , but it 's Homer losing Maggie , and working out what to tell Marge upon her return , that provides the best jokes . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson felt that the episode " comes close to finding the series in a rut , as it sort of offers another iteration of the ' Homer 's a bad father ' theme .

However , the emphasis on Marge 's issues makes it different , and it 's also fun to see life at Patty and Selma 's place . It 's another solid show . " Nate Meyers of Digitally Obsessed gave the episode 3 / 5 , writing , " The episode serves only to demonstrate what is already obvious : that Marge holds the family together .

It 's entertaining to see Homer struggle with the most basic of parenting skills , but this happens at the expense of all the other episodes this season that show him to be a good father ( albeit flawed ) . Still , it 's nice to see Marge get her own show . "