

= Weekend at Burnsie 's =

" Weekend at Burnsie 's " is the sixteenth episode of The Simpsons ' thirteenth season . It first aired in the United States on the Fox network on April 7 , 2002 . In the episode , Homer Simpson is prescribed medicinal marijuana after getting pecked in the eyes by a murder of crows . While his family and friends worry about the drug altering his personality , Homer becomes Mr. Burns 's vice president after cracking up at Burns 's antiquated jokes .

The episode was directed by Michael Marcantel . The plot idea for the episode was pitched by George Meyer , who wanted to make an episode about Homer getting addicted to medicinal marijuana . Executive producer and current showrunner Al Jean found the idea " very funny " and gave former staff writer Jon Vitti the duty to write the episode 's first draft . Fox was initially very uneasy to pass the episode for broadcast , since they were concerned that it might encourage younger viewers to smoke marijuana . Even though The Simpsons ' staff slightly altered the episode by not actually showing Homer smoke his medicinal marijuana , the network was still worried that it might cause a controversy .

The use of medicinal marijuana is prominently featured throughout " Weekend at Burnsie 's " . Because the legislation of medicinal marijuana is a controversial issue , The Simpsons ' staff has stated that they wanted to explore both sides of the argument , showing both the negative and positive effects of marijuana use . The episode does not come to an absolute conclusion about the issue . The episode also criticizes the use of genetically modified foods , and references Citizen Kane , Dragnet , The Birds , and Judy Garland , among other things . It also features the American rock band Phish as themselves .

Despite the network 's initial concerns , " Weekend at Burnsie 's " did not attract any controversy . In its original broadcast , the episode was seen by approximately 7 @. @ 2 million viewers , finishing in 46th place in the ratings the week it aired . Following the thirteenth season 's release on DVD and Blu @-@ ray on August 24 , 2010 , the episode received mostly positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

After a bad experience with genetically modified food , including baby corn the size of ordinary corn and a potato that eats Lisa 's carrots , Marge decides to plant her own garden . Crows arrive on the new garden , so Marge makes a scarecrow , which scares Homer . Homer destroys the scarecrow , and the crows eventually see Homer as their leader , following him everywhere and doing his bidding . But when the crows try to carry Maggie , Homer turns on them and they attack his eyes . He then goes to the hospital , where Dr. Hibbert prescribes him medicinal marijuana . Having had a bad experience with marijuana when he was younger , Homer objects to Hibbert 's suggestion at first , but eventually decides to try it .

Homer begins to enjoy smoking marijuana , even asking Flanders to read him the whole Holy Bible , much to Flanders ' excitement . When Flanders offers a petition to have a vote on the ban of medical marijuana in Springfield , Homer unwittingly adds his signature . Homer 's stoned state also sees him promoted to Executive Vice @-@ President at the power plant , because Mr. Burns appreciates how Homer laughs at all of his lame jokes , and so he goes to a rally for the legalization of medical marijuana (but the rally is actually held a day after the ban was approved by voters) . Homer 's eyes have healed and agrees to stop smoking pot after Marge tells him he needs to set a good example for his kids .

Mr. Burns asks Homer to help him with a speech for a crisis shareholders meeting , where the SNPP must raise millions of dollars or be forced into closure . Homer gives Smithers his last joint , and while Smithers is smoking and dressing in the coat Judy Garland once wore , Burns apparently drowns in his bathtub . Smithers tells Homer they have to cover up his death , telling him " Michael Eisner 's been dead for five years ! Ted Turner is just a hologram ! " . So , for the meeting , Smithers and Homer make Mr. Burns into a marionette , à la Weekend at Bernie 's , and the movement of the marionette inadvertently gets Mr. Burns ' heart working again . The shareholders are mollified and pledge renewed funding , and another financial crisis at the power plant is avoided .

= = Production = =

" Weekend at Burnsie 's " was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Michael Marcantel . It was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on April 7 , 2002 . The idea for the episode was pitched by former staff writer George Meyer , who wanted to make an episode in which Homer becomes addicted to medicinal marijuana . Executive producer and current showrunner Al Jean thought that the premise sounded " very funny " and assigned Vitti to write the episode 's first draft . Vitti wrote the script at his home and did not participate in any rewriting sessions with the other staff writers . " [...] it 's a funny bunch of people " , he said in the episode 's DVD commentary . " You definitely lose touch with what the movies you 're supposed to see , what 's good on TV ... " " Weekend at Burnsie 's " is the second episode Vitti wrote in which a character forgets to vote at an election , and the second episode he wrote in which Homer takes a chemical that causes him to be promoted by Burns and run into conflict with Smithers . " You can 't do anything for the first time at this point " , Vitti quipped . Producer and former showrunner Mike Reiss has stated that he thoroughly enjoyed working on " Weekend at Burnsie 's " . " I gotta say , this was the most fun I ever had working on an episode " , he said in the episode 's DVD commentary . " Everyone but me had stories to tell [about various things] . There would be about four hours of recollection before any rewriting happened . "

Because the use of medicinal marijuana is prominently featured in the episode , Fox had " incredible fears " about it and were very hesitant to have it broadcast . They especially disapproved of a scene in which Homer smokes marijuana for the first time , since they did not want to instruct children how to smoke . The staff discussed the scene for a long time with the network until they came up with a compromise . Just before the joint touches Homer 's lips , the scene cuts to a psychedelic sequence that transpires from the joint 's tip . Despite their concerns , Jean opined that the network gave the staff a " pretty good amount " of creative freedom with the episode . " [...] obviously , the network didn 't want us glorifying casual marijuana use " , he said in an interview with the music magazine Relix . " [...] like we usually do , we look at everything from two sides and it 's supposed to be a thoughtful look at a serious thing " . Despite the modification of the scene , the network and the series ' staff members were still worried about how the episode would be received . " Weeks before it aired , we were going ' This is really going to kill everything ... ' " , Jean said in the episode 's DVD commentary .

After being attacked by the crows , Homer is seen being treated by Dr. Hibbert at the Springfield General Hospital . While there are no visible scars on him , the character instead has a slightly curled hair . During a color screening of the scene , Homer 's body looked " a little too bloody " and damaged , prompting the staff to change it . " One thing I learned a long time ago is , you gotta be careful how you change [the characters '] basic model pack [s] " , Jean said in the episode 's DVD commentary . He also said that he was happy that many viewers identify with the characters and don 't want to see them get hurt or injured in any way . " They don 't mind if [Homer] falls down a cliff but [...] he should recover . " While working on the episode , the series ' staff debated what size to make Homer 's pupils when he is under the influence of marijuana . Because a common effect of smoking marijuana is to get dilated pupils , the animators initially suggested to widen them , but settled on only dilating Homer 's pupils slightly .

" Weekend at Burnsie 's " features the American rock band Phish as themselves . The idea to include the band in the episode was pitched during the episode 's production . " Phish plays at the rally . We thought they 'd be the perfect group to use for the plot . " , Jean said . Meyer , who pitched the episode 's premise , was a fan of the band , but Jean did not know much of them before they appeared in the episode ; " I 've never seen one of their concerts , so I 'm not the most familiar " , he said . He first became aware of the band after reading an article about them in Entertainment Weekly . As they worked on the episode however , Jean became more acquainted with the band members . " They were nice " , he said . " Jon Fishman said to me that the band had talked from time to time about if they were to ever be on The Simpsons , what it would be like . I said , ' Well , how close was it ? ' He said , ' Pretty close to what we expected . ' (laughs) That was gratifying . "

According to Peter Shapiro of Relix , some fans of Phish debated whether or not there had been any references to the band before " Weekend at Burnsie 's " . While the band was mentioned by name in the season 12 episode " Lisa the Tree Hugger " , there had not been any conscious attempts to reference the band before " Weekend at Burnsie 's " . This includes a scene in the season 11 episode " Saddlesore Galactica " , which shows Duncan the diving horse hanging from a hoist ; some Phish fans argued that the scene was a " blatant " reference to the cover of the band 's seventh studio album , Hoist . " That was a total coincidence " , Jean said . " It reminds me of the whole Wizard of Oz / Pink Floyd (Dark Side of the Moon) hook @-@ up . I haven 't done it and I 'm sure it works , but I just keep thinking that it must be a coincidence . Before there was the invention of video , I don 't know how Pink Floyd would have done a whole album to a movie . "

= = Themes and cultural references = =

On May 17 , 2002 , Robert S. Stephens and Roger A. Roffman of The Seattle Times wrote an analysis of " Weekend at Burnsie 's " in a guest column for the newspaper . The two argued that drugs are almost always shown as having only negative effects , even though 10 million people in the United States use marijuana for recreational purposes . " We believe there are good reasons for a more honest dialogue about the positive and negative effects of marijuana use . A recent episode of the popular TV show The Simpsons highlighted the pros and cons of marijuana use , and Homer Simpson 's experiences with marijuana provide an example of what we mean " , they wrote . For example , when under the influence of marijuana , Homer is relieved from the pain in his eye , and he also finds himself having a variety of sensory experiences and an enhanced appreciation of music and food . " These are real effects reported by many marijuana users , and we would be hard pressed to call them anything other than benefits " , Stephens and Roffman wrote . However , Homer is also depicted spending more time with other drug users than with his family , and his friends find that his personality has changed . Eventually , Homer is shown having problems with memory and attention , losing track of the date on which a pro @-@ marijuana rally takes place . Stephens and Roffman wrote that the side effects shown in the episode are " Perhaps a bit exaggerated , but clearly there are costs of marijuana use similar to these that are experienced by real @-@ life users . "

Jean has stated that he " does not know enough " to say whether he approves of the legislation of medicinal marijuana , but none of The Simpsons ' writers use the drug . " It 's one of the most sober writing staffs I 've ever encountered " , staff writer Max Pross said in the episode 's DVD commentary . When asked about what stance the episode holds regarding the legislation of medicinal marijuana , Jean said that series ' staff wanted to explore both sides of the issue , rather than making an absolute statement . He added that the episode is rather a critique of legislations that are immediately criminalized after they are legitimized . " The stance is that it seems ridiculous to legalize something and then criminalize it , which I have seen happen in various states " , Jean said . He continued , " It 's just weird to take away a right or to grant people a liberty and then abandon it . I would say that 's the strongest statement [the episode] makes . " The episode also criticizes the use of genetically modified foods . At the beginning of the episode , Marge announces that the family 's dinner includes genetically modified vegetables , to which Lisa replies " American corporations should stop playing god with nature . " She then notices that her potato starts eating her carrot . Even though the episode portrays genetic modifications in a negative light , none of The Simpsons ' writers were actually against the technique . After the scene was written , Reiss asked all the writers if they were against genetic modifications of food , and none of them were . " Very often we take these stands on the show that we do not believe in at all " , Reiss explained in the DVD commentary for the episode . The scene was originally three times longer , and was conceived during a rewrite session with the staff writers .

The name of the episode is a reference to the 1989 comedy film Weekend at Bernie 's , in which two young insurance executives try to convince people that their deceased boss is alive . The last part of the episode , in which Homer and Smithers believe that they have killed Burns , is based on the film 's plot . While under the influence of marijuana , Homer shaves his beard , causing blood to

pour out from his face . To Homer , the blood looks like psychedelic rainbows , and the song that plays during the scene is " Wear Your Love Like Heaven " by Scottish singer @-@ songwriter Donovan . When speaking at the Phish concert , Homer stands in front of a large picture of himself . The scene is a reference to the 1941 drama film Citizen Kane , in which the main character Charles Foster Kane makes a political speech in front of a large picture of himself . In another scene , Homer and Smithers smoke marijuana in order to find Mr. Burns ' jokes funny . While high , Smithers wears a suit similar to one worn by American actress and singer Judy Garland . While talking to Homer , Smithers forgets to take Mr. Burns out of his bathtub . Horrified , Smithers thinks that the unconscious Mr. Burns has drowned . The scene is a reference to " The Big High " , an episode of the television crime drama Dragnet in which a married couple accidentally drown their baby while they are smoking marijuana .

= = Release = =

In its original American broadcast on April 7 , 2002 , " Weekend at Burnsie 's " received a 6 @. @ 8 rating , according to Nielsen Media Research , translating to approximately 7 @. @ 2 million viewers . The episode finished in 34th place in the ratings for the week of April 1 @- @ 7 , 2002 , tying with a new episode of the comedy television series Malcolm in the Middle . On August 24 , 2010 , " Weekend at Burnsie 's " was released as part of The Simpsons : The Complete Thirteenth Season DVD and Blu @- @ ray set . Matt Groening , Al Jean , Matt Selman , Don Payne , Jon Vitti , Tom Gammill , Max Pross , Mike Reiss and David Silverman participated in the audio commentary of the episode .

Following its home video release , " Weekend at Burnsie 's " received mostly positive reviews from critics . Jennifer Malkowski of DVD Verdict praised the episode 's premise , writing that it " brim [s] with potential " even though it is " fairly simple " . She also praised the episode 's setpiece , which she described as " particularly good " , even though she found it to be " super @- @ random " . She gave the episode an A- rating and added that it has " lots of great gags " . Writing for WhatCulture ! , Adam Rayner described " Weekend at Burnsie 's " as " utterly hilarious " and " superbly executed " . He wrote , " Apart from being very funny , the episode also manages to make statements about Marijuana , but never becomes preachy . " He continued that it can be compared to the series ' best episodes , writing that it " resemble [s] The Simpsons in its glory years " . Casey Broadwater of Blu @- @ ray.com considers it to be one of the season 's best episodes , and so did High @- @ Def Digest 's Aaron Peck , who described it as one of his personal favorites . James Plath , a reviewer for DVD Town , wrote that the episode is a " classic " . On the other hand , giving the episode a mixed review , Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide wrote that " Weekend at Burnsie 's " " falls into the abyss as a distinctly ordinary episode . " He continued , " Like many other S13 shows , this one feels recycled , as it lacks much to make it stand out as creative or memorable . " He summarized the episode as being " decidedly mediocre " .

Since its broadcast , " Weekend at Burnsie 's " garnered little to no scrutiny from viewers . Vitti has never gotten any questions about the episode , except from his sister @- @ in @- @ law who wanted him to explain the episode for his nephews . " [...] My sister @- @ in @- @ law called me up saying that I needed to talk to my nephews about how this was wrong that Homer did " , Vitti said . " They watched it and had lots of questions for her . And she referred them all to me . So there are some people who are still bothered by it . " The little amount of scrutiny that the episode attracted took The Simpsons ' staff by surprise , as they anticipated that the episode would generate a lot of controversy . Instead , " Blame It on Lisa " , an episode which aired the previous week , caused an uproar in Brazil because of its depiction of the country . It became one of the biggest controversies the series has ever faced . " It just goes to show that you never know what 's going to be a problem " , Jean said in the DVD commentary for " Weekend at Burnsie 's " .