

= The Cartridge Family =

" The Cartridge Family " is the fifth episode of The Simpsons ' ninth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on November 2 , 1997 . It was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Pete Michels . In the episode , Homer purchases a gun to protect his family , of which Marge disapproves . Homer begins to show extremely careless gun usage causing Marge to leave him when she catches Bart using the gun without their permission . The episode was intended to show guns in a neutral way , and faced some problems with the censors because of the subject matter . Critical reaction was mostly positive .

= = Plot = =

The Simpsons attend a soccer match between Mexico and Portugal . When the game starts , the crowd begins to lose interest and a violent football riot ensues . After the riot spreads throughout the town , Marge fears for the family and tells Homer to pay for a Home Security System . Finding out that the system will cost \$ 500 , Homer decides to save money by buying a firearm instead . After the five @-@ day waiting period , Homer surprises Marge with his new revolver from a local gun store . Marge is horrified and demands that he get rid of the gun at once . Homer persuades Marge to come with him to the local National Rifle Association meeting to try to get her to change her mind , but after the meeting , she remains unconvinced .

Marge reveals just how uncomfortable with the gun she is , and begs Homer to get rid of it . Homer promises to do so , but instead hides it in the vegetable crisper . Later , Bart and Milhouse discover the loaded firearm and play with it in the kitchen . Marge steps into the kitchen just in time to stop them , and berates Homer for breaking his promise , by giving Homer an ultimatum .

After this , she promptly leaves with some suitcases and the children and checks into a motel . That night , Homer hosts an NRA meeting at his house but the other members are far from impressed by his reckless gun usage and he is kicked out of the association . Realizing what his behavior has cost him , Homer goes to the motel where Marge and the children are spending the night , meaning to reconcile .

Homer and Marge make up , after Homer explains he has finally gotten rid of the gun . While leaving , Snake arrives to rob the desk clerk . Homer pulls out his gun and Marge is angry with him for lying again , but while he tries to apologize , Snake snatches the gun . The other NRA members arrive and foil Snake . Homer finally says he does not trust himself and asks Marge to throw the gun away herself . However , just as Marge is about to throw away the gun , she sees a reflection of herself holding it and decides to keep it .

= = Production = =

This was the first episode to air which was executive produced by Mike Scully . Sam Simon pitched an episode for one of the first seasons which saw Homer getting a gun and nobody wanting him to have it . The episode concluded with Homer foiling a robbery and stating that although guns bring destruction , it worked for him . However , this episode was pitched by Scully for either season seven or eight , before being used for season nine . This provided the basic outline , and John Swartzwelder wrote the script . A lot of lines in the episode put guns in a positive light , as the staff felt that they could not just make an episode about how bad they were . Several of the staff , including Swartzwelder , are " pro gun " , although others , such as Matt Groening , are completely against them . The episode was designed to be non @-@ biased and to portray each side of the argument equally . Scully noted that if there is any message in the episode it is that a man like Homer should not own a gun . The censors were nervous about some of the episode 's subject matter , such as Homer pointing the gun in Marge 's face , and Bart aiming the gun at Milhouse with the apple in his mouth , but ultimately let it go .

The opening sequence where soccer is portrayed as the most boring sport imaginable was intended to show that soccer was more boring on television than live , but both Michels and

Groening enjoy the game . The referee at the game is a caricature of the janitor at Film Roman , who supplied director Pete Michels with every piece of soccer information he needed to design the episode . Pelé also makes an appearance at the match , although he is voiced by Hank Azaria .

The episode closes with music from The Avengers . After the music had been recorded , Scully felt that it did not suit the ending and so wished to change it to something else . However , it was too late in production to get the full orchestra back to do a recording , and union rules meant that previous recordings could not be reused .

= = Cultural references = =

The chalkboard gag references the Richard Gere gerbil urban legend .

The gun shop is based on the shop that the Los Angeles Police Department went to during the North Hollywood bank robbery to acquire more ammunition . The title of this episode is a play on the name of 1970s television series The Partridge Family . The end music is the theme to the 1960s series The Avengers , and the song playing when Homer is sitting and watching things go by while he is waiting five days for his gun is " The Waiting " by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers . Petty rarely lets his music be used on television , but being a fan of The Simpsons , he allowed them to use it .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " The Cartridge Family " finished 26th in ratings for the week of October 27 ? November 2 , 1997 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 5 , equivalent to approximately 10 @. @ 3 million viewing households . It was the third highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network , following The X @- @ Files and King of the Hill .

The episode received several positive reviews , being included in the Herald Sun 's list of the top twenty The Simpsons episodes . It was also named the fifth best episode in the show 's history in an article by The Florida Times @- @ Union . The Pittsburgh Post @- @ Gazette also praised the episode , calling The Simpsons " the only sitcom in memory to treat gun control with any fairness " .

On the other hand , the episode has been criticized by several outlets . The staff received several complaints from the NRA about the portrayal of the organization in the episode , despite the fact that the Springfield NRA revokes Homer 's membership for his irresponsible behavior . Ian Jones and Steve Williams criticized the episode , calling it " a messy , unfocused lampooning of gun culture " . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , found that it was " one of the most politically unambiguous episodes ever " , but that " [it] is very dull and the plot isn 't sustainable " .

The episode was not initially aired on the United Kingdom satellite channel Sky1 due to scenes of flagrant gun misuse , yet was aired several times on BBC Two in an earlier evening timeslot . The episode was also included on the Too Hot for TV VHS and DVD , along with " Treehouse of Horror IX " , " Natural Born Kissers " , and " Grampa vs. Sexual Inadequacy " .