

= The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace =

" The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " is the second episode of the tenth season of The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 20 , 1998 . In the episode , Homer has a midlife crisis realizing his life is half over and he has not accomplished anything . He begins to admire Thomas Edison and decides to create inventions to follow in Edison 's footsteps and make his life worthwhile .

The idea behind " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " came from Dan Greaney , who assigned John Swartzwelder to write the episode . While directing the episode , Mark Kirkland visited the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange , New Jersey to receive inspiration for several scenes in the episode that take place in this museum . William Daniels made a guest appearance in the episode as the character KITT from the television series Knight Rider .

" The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " was viewed in approximately 7 @. @ 95 million households . In general , it received positive reviews from television critics , with many singling it out as a strong beginning to a season .

= = Plot = =

Homer is shocked to hear on the radio that the average life expectancy for men is now 76 @. @ 2 years , which makes him realize that , at 38 @. @ 1 , his life is half over . Marge informs him that he is actually 39 , which depresses him even more . Homer thinks he has not accomplished anything that will be considered worthwhile after he dies . His family tries to cheer him up by showing him a film of his accomplishments and a special appearance by the character KITT from the Knight Rider television series that Homer is a fan of . When the film projector stops working , Lisa mentions that Thomas Edison invented the projector as well as many other inventions . Homer decides to learn more about Edison and eventually idolizes him . He becomes so obsessed with him that he unknowingly begins to annoy people with stories about Edison 's life and inventions . In an attempt to follow in Edison 's footsteps , Homer quits his job at the power plant to become an inventor .

Homer gets to work and develops a few inventions , such as an alarm that beeps every three seconds when everything is okay , a shotgun which shoots make @- @ up onto women 's faces , an electric hammer , and a reclining chair which has a built @- @ in toilet . None of these inventions are well received by his family and he feels disappointed over his failure to invent anything useful . However , he soon becomes encouraged when he discovers that the family likes one of his other inventions ? a chair with two hinged legs on the back , making it impossible to tip over backwards . His hopes are destroyed when he notices his poster of Edison , which shows Edison sitting in the same type of chair , indicating that he has already invented Homer 's untippable chair . Bart points out that the chair is not featured on a list of Edison 's inventions , and that maybe no one knows he invented it .

Homer and Bart therefore set out to the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange , New Jersey with his electric hammer to destroy the chair . Before he smashes the chair , Homer notices a poster of Edison 's which shows he had fewer inventions than Leonardo da Vinci . This means that Edison compared himself to Leonardo , much like Homer compares himself to Edison . Feeling a renewed connection to Edison , Homer decides not to destroy the chair . Homer also suggests that they destroy some of Leonardo 's creations , but when Bart points out those are in Italy , Homer settles for taking it out on Eli Whitney .

Homer and Bart return to Springfield , without knowing that they left Homer 's electric hammer behind at the museum . Later when the family watches the news on television , Kent Brockman announces that the chair and the electric hammer have just been discovered at the Edison Museum and are expected to generate millions for Edison 's already wealthy heirs . After Lisa complains that it should have been Homer 's money , Homer angrily comments that it is a good thing he is sitting on his reclining toilet chair .

= = Production = =

" The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " was written by John Swartzwelder , who had a deal with the producers of the show to write five scripts for season ten . Although he was the one who wrote the episode , Dan Greaney was the one who came up with the idea for it . Greaney based Homer 's intense obsession with Edison on the fact that when he himself would have an obsession with something in life , he would badger and bore people with details of it . " Homer 's relationship to Thomas Edison 's achievements is a version of my own experience of trying to communicate the experience of things you love by driving people crazy , " Greaney said in a DVD audio commentary for the episode . The untippable chair was also an idea of Greaney 's ; while working on the episode , he was leaning back in his chair and fell backwards . He casually said it would be great if there were legs on the back of the chair and someone in the writing room said that would be a great invention for Homer . Soon after coming up with the story , Greaney told it to Swartzwelder so that he could turn it into a script . Greaney said " it couldn 't in my best dreams have turned out as good as it did if I had written it . "

Mark Kirkland was the director of " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " . He recalls that when he attended the table read for the episode , the staff thought it was " hilarious " and they could tell it was " going to be a good one . " It was the last episode to be produced during the season nine production run and because it takes several months to complete the production of a single episode , it had to air as a hold over in the upcoming tenth season . It was decided that " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " would be the premiere episode of season ten . As a result , the annual premiere party was held at the Museum of Science and Technology in Los Angeles ? it was a tradition for the premiere party to be related to the premiere episode .

Kirkland cites his assistant director Matthew Nastuk as a big influence on the episode . He became heavily involved with the animation because he had grown up in New Jersey , where the Thomas Edison National Historical Park that Homer and Bart visit is located . To help make the museum look as authentic as possible , Kirkland and Nastuk visited it and took a large number of photographs that they brought back to the animation studio . At one point in the episode , Homer writes complex math formulas on a chalkboard . The producers wanted them to be actual formulas , so writer David X. Cohen got in contact with a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who were able to provide them .

The episode features a guest appearance by actor William Daniels as KITT , a character from the Knight Rider television series of which Homer is a fan . KITT is an artificially intelligent electronic computer module installed in an automobile . In the episode , after failing to cheer Homer up with a film reel of his life , the family shows him a video featuring KITT . The automobile , seen driving in the desert , tells Homer the following : " Hello Homer . It 's me , KITT , from TV 's Knight Rider . Your family has asked me to invite you to a very special ... " ; the film reel breaks just before KITT finishes his sentence . This of course leads to Homer becoming even more depressed . Daniels ' appearance in " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " was the first and only time that he voiced KITT outside of Knight Rider and the film Knight Rider 2000 . He recalls that " when I told my son in New York that I was going to be on The Simpsons , I think that was the first time that he was really impressed with what I was doing ! The Simpsons is a great show and I 'm glad they thought of KITT in one of their jokes . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " finished 25th in the ratings for the week of September 14 ? 20 , 1998 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 0 , equivalent to approximately 7 @. @ 95 million viewing households . It tied with Beverly Hills , 90210 and Home Improvement for the 25th place . The episode was the third highest @-@ rated show (tied with Beverly Hills , 90210) on the Fox network that week , following Ally McBeal and Party of Five .

" The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " has received generally positive reviews from critics . The Daily Mail cited as a " superb " and " hilarious " episode , and James Plath of DVD Town thought it had strong writing . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial

Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , called it " a terrific episode , full of wit and sly digs at our expectations of Homer 's abilities . The fact that he invents things that other people find useful (and steal the credit for) is both amusing and a little sad . Poor Homer . " Writing for DVD Movie Guide , Colin Jacobson commented that " though ' Wizard ' borders on ' Homer ? s wacky scheme ' territory , his attempts to come up with something significant offer amusement . At no point does ' Wizard ' threaten to become a particularly strong episode , but it entertains to a reasonable degree . I do like the ' Everything ? s Okay Alarm ' and the makeup gun , though . "

Although " Lard of the Dance " aired as a teaser episode a month earlier , " The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace " was the official season premiere of The Simpsons ' tenth season . Don Aucoin of The Boston Globe wrote that " It is gratifying to report that , based on the season premiere , The Simpsons promises to remain the most reliable half @-@ hour of laughs on television . " Similarly , David Bianculli of The New York Daily News reported that " The Simpsons is one series that , year after year , remains fresh and funny and lively and surprising . Based on tonight 's season premiere , that amazing streak is in no danger of ending . " Lauri Githens of The Buffalo News gave the episode a 5 / 5 rating , commenting that it shows that " This cynical , bleak yet somehow still hopeful comedy is nowhere near midlife crisis with Season No. 10 . It 's still fall @-@ down funny . Thank God . " She cited Homer 's line to Marge as he and Bart leave for the Edison Museum , " I 'm @-@ taking @-@ Bart @-@ over @-@ state @-@ lines @-@ back @-@ soon @-@ I @-@ have @-@ your @-@ wallet @-@ bye ! " , as the best line of the episode .

Lexington Herald @-@ Leader 's Heather Svokos was not as pleased . She stated that " As always , the show is better written than most anything on TV , but for a 10th season premiere , it didn 't blow me out of the water . " In addition , Phil Kloer of The Atlanta Journal gave the episode a C grade , calling it an " off episode " . He commented that it " doesn 't have the zing that most Simpsons episodes do . " Kloer did , however , enjoy Homer 's inventions such as the hamburger earmuffs and the make @-@ up gun , and Homer 's line to Marge before he shoots her with it : " Try to keep your nostrils closed . " Marge 's response after being shot , " Homer ! You ? ve got it set on whore ! " , was commended by The Gazette , DVD Verdict , and Ian Jane of DVD Talk , who called the scene the highlight of the episode .

In his 2015 book The Simpsons and their Mathematical Secrets , Dr Simon Singh wrote that in the episode , Homer writes an equation on a chalkboard and ? If you work it out , you get the mass of a Higgs boson that ? s only a bit larger than the nano @-@ mass of a Higgs boson actually is . It ? s kind of amazing as Homer makes this prediction 14 years before it was discovered . ? He stated that the mathematical backgrounds of many of the show 's writers made it the " most mathematical TV show on prime @-@ time television in history " , and it could " encourage and nourish " young people with an interest in mathematics .