

= At Long Last Leave =

" At Long Last Leave " is the fourteenth episode of The Simpsons ' twenty @-@ third season , and the 500th episode overall of the series . In the episode , the Simpsons discover that the inhabitants of Springfield have grown tired of them and have secretly decided to throw them out of the city . After being evicted from Springfield , the family members end up in a rugged place without rules and regulations called The Outlands . There , they briefly come across their neighbor Julian Assange , who created WikiLeaks . Assange , who is in fear of extradition to Sweden and then the United States , guest @-@ starred in the episode as himself and recorded his lines over the phone having been granted asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in Britain , while waiting for the results of Assange v Swedish Prosecution Authority .

Michael Price wrote " At Long Last Leave " without the intention of it becoming the 500th episode and felt honored when it was selected for the milestone . Television critics have given the episode generally positive reviews , particularly praising it for a montage of the series ' couch gags that was included in the opening sequence . The storyline of " At Long Last Leave " has , however , received criticism for being similar to stories previously done on The Simpsons and in The Simpsons Movie .

During its original airing on the Fox network in the United States on February 19 , 2012 , the episode was watched by about 5 @.@ 77 million people and received a 2 @.@ 6 Nielsen rating in the demographic for adults aged 18 ? 49 . Before this broadcast , Fox promoted the 500th episode milestone by arranging an attempt to break the Guinness World Record for longest continuous television viewing . A hundred fans of The Simpsons were invited to watch a marathon of the series ' episodes , starting on February 8 , 2012 . The record was broken 86 hours and 37 minutes later on February 12 , 2012 , with only two fans left watching the marathon .

= = Plot = =

The Simpson family is advised of a citywide nuclear safety drill and all the inhabitants of Springfield are told to stay in their basements for three hours . The family members quickly become bored in the basement and decide to leave the house and go see the empty city . As they walk through Springfield , they see an unusual number of cars parked by the City Hall . The Simpsons go in and discover that everyone in town has gathered for a secret town meeting and have voted unanimously to kick them out of Springfield forever . Mayor Quimby reveals that the city has gone bankrupt due to the constant cleaning up of the family 's shenanigans over the years , ranging from Homer 's drunken antics , Bart 's various pranks , and Lisa 's environmental concerns . Marge delivers a heart @-@ felt plea to the residents to let the Simpsons live in the one place they call home , but they refuse , with Quimby declaring her the " worst Simpson " for always trying to see the family in a positive light .

A big celebration is held by the city 's population as the Simpsons are officially evicted from Springfield . When the family drives out into the middle of nowhere at night with no place to stay , they come across a man who takes them to a county called The Outlands , which is a dirty , run @-@ down place where there are no rules and regulations . The Simpsons settle in The Outlands and meet Julian Assange ? their unfriendly next @-@ door neighbor who operates the WikiLeaks Headquarters there .

While the rest of the family gets used to their new home , Marge becomes homesick . Homer sneaks her back into Springfield one night under the disguise of Mr. Burns and Smithers , and they spend the night getting drunk and having sex in their old abandoned home . However , Chief Wiggum sees through their disguises , and rallies the people of Springfield to the Simpson home to capture Homer and Marge . Marge is initially angry at the members of the mob , but she stuns them by saying that she does not want to live in Springfield or deal with them anymore , having found a place to live where she and her family can be accepted for who they are and love each other without worry of hate and judgment from others . Marge and Homer march through the visibly disillusioned crowd and return to The Outlands . Back in the Simpsons ' new home , Bart discovers Lenny and Carl sneaking in . They tell the family they long to start a new life in The Outlands . Soon , Moe ,

Mayor Quimby , and many other Springfield residents show up , wishing to abandon their lives in Springfield and start over in The Outlands . Soon , all of Springfield moves there to start new lives with the Simpsons , and they begin rebuilding a new city which they name Springfield .

= = Production = =

" At Long Last Leave " , which is the 500th episode of The Simpsons , was written by Michael Price . The Simpsons ' showrunner Al Jean has described it as " a tribute to people who love the show . " Being a fan of musical theater , Price titled the episode in reference to the Cole Porter song " At Long Last Love " . Price did not write " At Long Last Leave " with the intention of it becoming the 500th episode ; that decision was made afterwards when the staff members realized the story offered an opportunity for a look @-@ back at the history of the Simpson family . He said in an interview with the magazine Channel Guide that he was " deeply honored " when his episode was selected for the milestone . As acknowledged by Price in that interview , the plot of the episode features similarities to the 2007 film The Simpsons Movie , in which the Simpsons are forced to flee to Alaska after Homer angers the townspeople in Springfield by polluting a lake . However , Price commented that " I think it 's different from the movie in that it sort of does reference back the entire history of the show , the collective experience of Springfield vis @-@ a @-@ vis the Simpsons , whereas the movie they were forced to run away due to that very specific thing " . He further noted that despite the similarities " we [ the staff ] liked it enough to go with it anyway . " The plot was first announced to the press at the Comic @-@ Con convention in San Diego , California on July 23 , 2011 , during a panel with the cast and crew of The Simpsons .

The episode features several guest appearances , with Kelsey Grammer and Jackie Mason returning for short cameos as Sideshow Bob and Rabbi Krustofski , respectively . American musician Alison Krauss and her band Union Station recorded a bluegrass version of the Simpsons theme song that is played in the episode and over the closing credits .

Australian activist Julian Assange ? the founder of WikiLeaks ? appeared as himself . Many of his lines were written by Australian author Kathy Lette , who is one of Assange 's friends . According to Lette , " Julian and The Simpsons producers asked me to rewrite his scene and dialogue . I guess they just wanted me to add a little Aussie irony to the script . Julian does not suffer from an irony deficiency ! I used to write a sitcom for Columbia Pictures , the long @-@ running series The Facts of Life , so the producers knew I could fire off a quip or two . " In 2010 , Swedish authorities issued a European Arrest Warrant to extradite Assange from Britain to Sweden for questioning in relation to sexual assault allegations made against him there . Assange was arrested in England , before being freed on conditional bail until a decision would be made as to whether or not he should be extradited to Sweden . Assange recorded his lines over the phone while under house arrest in England . Jean , who directed Assange 's performance from Los Angeles , only acquired a phone number to call and received no information about the whereabouts of the activist . According to Jean in an interview with Entertainment Weekly , The Simpsons creator Matt Groening had found out through a rumor that Assange wanted to appear on the show . Casting director Bonnie Pietila was therefore given the task to contact Assange and make sure the guest appearance could happen . The episode features no reference to Assange 's legal situation at the time of his recording . Jean commented that he is " a controversial figure , and there 's a good reason he 's controversial . There was discussion internally whether or not to have him on the show , but ultimately we went ahead and did it . " Groening has said in an interview that " We [ the staff ] dare ourselves to do things and Julian Assange was a dare . "

= = Promotion = =

To promote the 500th episode milestone , the Fox network , which airs The Simpsons , attempted to break the Guinness World Record for longest continuous television viewing by arranging a marathon screening of the show 's episodes at Hollywood & Highland . The record of 86 hours , six minutes , and 41 seconds was set in 2010 when three people watched all episodes of the Fox show

24 . A hundred fans were selected to participate in the Simpsons marathon , which was also a contest to determine which fan could last the longest into the marathon . The screening started on February 8 , 2012 with " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , the first episode of the series , and ended on February 12 of that same year with " Faith Off , " the eleventh episode of the eleventh season . At that point , 86 hours and 37 minutes had passed , which meant the record was broken . The two remaining viewers ? Jeremiah Franco and Carin Shreve ? were crowned joint winners of the contest and each won US \$ 10 @, @ 500 . They also got to attend the 500th Episode Celebration party held on February 13 , 2012 for the cast and crew of The Simpsons .

= = Reception = =

The episode was originally broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on February 19 , 2012 . It was watched by approximately 5 @. @ 77 million people during this broadcast , and in the demographic for adults aged 18 ? 49 , it received a 2 @. @ 6 Nielsen rating and a seven percent share . The rating was a thirty percent increase from the previous episode , " The Daughter Also Rises " . " At Long Last Leave " became the most @- @ watched broadcast in Fox 's Animation Domination lineup for the night in terms of total viewers , finishing higher than new episodes of the four series Family Guy ( 5 @. @ 47 million ) , American Dad ! ( 4 @. @ 43 million ) , Napoleon Dynamite ( 4 @. @ 41 million ) , and The Cleveland Show ( 2 @. @ 61 million ) . It also became the second highest @- @ rated broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 , being exceeded only by the Family Guy episode which received a 2 @. @ 8 rating .

" At Long Last Leave " has received generally positive reviews from television critics , particularly for its couch gag in the Simpsons opening sequence . This couch gag features a frame @- @ by @- @ frame montage of previous couch gags that pulls back into a photomosaic of the number " 500 " . The A.V. Club critic Hayden Childs wrote that the " best thing about the 500th Simpsons episode is the opening couch montage , which hits the nostalgia bullseye almost perfectly . " HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall praised the couch gag as being " marvelous " , noting that it " actually made me choke up a bit . " Sepinwall commended " At Long Last Leave " , commenting that " like many latter @- @ day Simpsons outings , [ it ] features a story we 've seen variations on several times before ( including in The Simpsons Movie ) , but also features many funny jokes that affirm my belief that I 'm happier to live in a world that keeps giving us new Simpsons episodes [ ... ] than I will be in the one where that inevitably stops . " Similarly to Sepinwall , Tim Goodman of The Hollywood Reporter wrote : " I got a few laughs and that 's all I ever look for in The Simpsons these days . I just like knowing it 's still there . [ ... ] It doesn 't have the spring in the legs quite like it used to . It 's not going to dazzle at the same spectacular rate . But even after 500 episodes , it still has a little something left . " Goodman described the couch gag as " lovely " .

Matt Roush of TV Guide wrote favorably about " At Long Last Leave " , describing it as a " keeper " and highlighting the " dazzling opening sequence " . He concluded that The Simpsons " once again delivers the goods , proving itself to be a classic for our age and for the ages . " Childs was less positive , writing that the episode is " nothing special " as " all of the elements seem drawn from earlier stories " and " only a few of the jokes rise to the lowered bar of latter @- @ day Simpsons humor . " He added , however , that " nothing in the episode goes outrageously wrong , either . There is little Family Guy @- @ style stupidity and randomness , the satire is gently pointed inward , and the guest star , while splashy for his controversy , does not hijack the plot ? instead appearing for a single joke before vanishing . " TIME critic James Poniewozik commented that " At Long Last Leave " was an " all right " episode , noting that certain gags felt " forced by the writers ? room " . Poniewozik , who thinks the quality of The Simpsons declined at the end of the 1990s , added however that " a few moments made me bark out loud and realize why I loved the show in the first place . "