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'The Simpsons' recently overtook 'The Flintstones' for the distinction as the cartoon with the most episodes ever aired.

'The Simpsons' spook in 'Treehouse of Horror'

'The Simpsons' annual Halloween special will air this Sunday on Fox

By **Evan A. Denbaum**
Entertainment Editor

Even back in the early years of "The Simpsons," when schools would ban children from wearing "Simpsons" T-shirts and when every American family tuned in on Thursday nights to see what Bart would say next, there were the infamous "Simpsons" Halloween specials.

From the first "Treehouse of Horror" to this Sunday's upcoming "Treehouse of Horror 8," October 31 has always been a time in the year which allowed the show's writers (which in the past have included Conan O'Brien) to do whatever they wanted with the script.

The "Treehouse of Horror" specials, which have included parodies of movies (such as "Nightmare on Elm Street" and "King Kong"), television ("The Twilight Zone"), books (including "The Shining") and poetry ("The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe), have been able to bring the Simpson family another step further into our culture.

The epitome of this is seen in Treehouse number 6, in which Homer and Bart are rendered in 3-D through the use of computer

animation. The ending of the computer-generated sequence is possibly the eeriest thing ever broadcast on television, depicting Homer in our "real" world.

This Sunday's "Treehouse of Horror 8" will include parodies of the film "The Fly," the classic literary text "The Crucible" and the not-so-classic "Omega Man." Also watch out for the inevitable appearance of two tentacled aliens, Kang and Kodos, who have so far appeared in every "Treehouse of Horror."

Fox's Simpsons special will start Sunday at 7 p.m., with two Halloween episodes from years past.

First is "Springfield Files," an "X-Files" parody featuring animated versions of Mulder and Scully. "Treehouse of Horror 7" follows at 7:30, gearing up Simpsons fans for the new Treehouse number 8.

And at the end of each episode, make sure to pay special attention to the credit sequence, in which a little Halloween flavor is added to staff and crew names.

For that touch, and for this pop-culture cartoon tradition, we have "Mad" Groening and James "Hell" Brooks to thank.



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