

TV Reviews: Animated FOX Programs Celebrate Halloween in November

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 7, 2010 - 1:32pm

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CHICAGO – What happens when Halloween happens to land on a Sunday night and FOX is airing the World Series? The annual tradition of the “Treehouse of Horror” episode of “The Simpsons” has to air in November. Damn you, Bud Selig. At least FOX is trying to make amends by offering not just one holiday-themed episode tonight but extending the affair to all four of their “Animation Domination” programs — “The Simpsons,” “The Cleveland Show,” “Family Guy,” and “American Dad.” I’ve seen all four and am here to provide a handy preview to the anachronistic hilarity.

“The Simpsons: Treehouse of Horror XXI”



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

It has become cliched to repeatedly bag on “The Simpsons” for not being as good as it used to be. I get it. I know that you loved “The Simpsons” back when it was brilliant and I don’t think that even the people who make the show would claim that it’s been anywhere near its prime in years; probably more than a decade. And yet there’s usually still a spark of what used to be the creative flame in each year’s “Treehouse of Horror.” It almost feels as if the writers have more freedom for this episode and they’ve been some of the most beloved in the entire run of one of the best shows in history.



The Simpsons: Treehouse of Horror XXI

Photo credit: FOX

How does the 2010 “Treehouse” compare? It’s average. The writing is not going to send you back to change that canceled season pass but you won’t regret having watched it. On a quality level, it’s kind of where “The Simpsons” was pre-movie: Not up to its best but still better than a lot of television options (faint praise that can’t really be used for the last few incredibly-lackluster years). So, it’s above average for current

“Simpsons,” below it if you’re a “Treehouse of Horror” aficionado.

The three segments in this year’s edition parody board games, “Dead Calm,” and “Twilight.” The first, brief bit, titled “War and Pieces,” features Milhouse and Bart turning Springfield into a world of gigantic video games not unlike the classic “ToH” bit in which corporate logos came to life and terrorized the city. It’s fun to watch the boys get struck by a red pin in their “Battleboat” and watch Chief Wiggums get crushed by a chess piece, but this is the kind of thing “The Simpsons” has done before and usually with a bit more style.

The second segment (“Master and Cadaver”) is stronger but why on Earth they decided to parody “Dead Calm” remains a mystery (either there was a late-night cable airing during a writer’s dry spell or it was a discarded “ToH” idea twenty years ago pulled out of the trash can). Marge and Homer are on a sailing trip when they pull a man from the drink. He claims that his shipmates tried to poison him but Homer and Marge don’t believe him and murder their stowaway. It’s a funny, well-paced segment.

Finally, “The Simpsons” takes on “Twilight” in “Tweenlight” as Lisa falls for the pale new boy at school who turns out to be a vampire. Considering how many comedy programs and sketch shows have already tackled the Stephenie Meyer series, “The Simpsons” feels a bit late to the party but, like the rest of the episode, it features a few solid laughs.

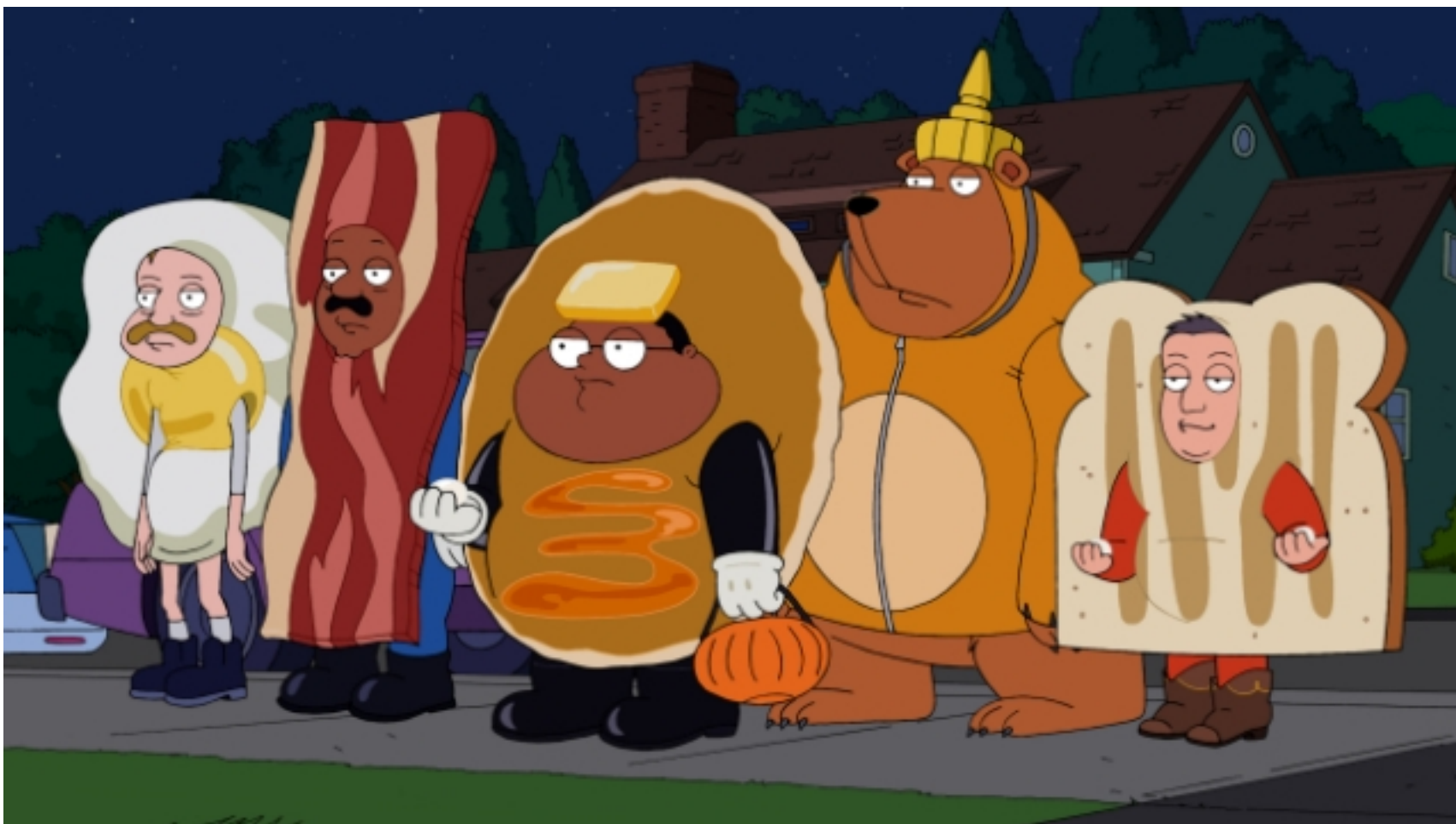
All in all, “Treehouse of Horror XXI” is entertaining enough to take a look, especially for those of you who have caught the first XX, but like the remaining Halloween candy still left a week into November, it feels a bit stale.

“The Cleveland Show: It’s the Great Pancake, Cleveland Brown”



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Cleveland Brown’s son Cleveland Jr. is a fragile soul. The rotund 14-year-old is not only the regular object of derision at school but almost seems to enjoy it. As his father points out in this funny episode of “The Cleveland Show,” he not only talks to his stuffed animals but thinks they talk back to him and then changes his opinion based on what they say. He’s a giant child stuck in a teenager’s body and the Halloween episode of “The Cleveland Show” is all about his dad struggling with the fact that his kid is still more than a little immature.



The Cleveland Show: It’s the Great Pancake, Cleveland Brown

Photo credit: FOX

It starts when Cleveland Jr. reveals that he wants to trick or treat, dressed up like a giant pancake. His father forbids it but Cleveland Jr. goes out anyway and, naturally, gets the crap kicked out of him by the town bullies. They egg him and then continue to “trick” the Brown household. Cleveland has had enough and pushes his son to finally grow up and leave childish things behind.

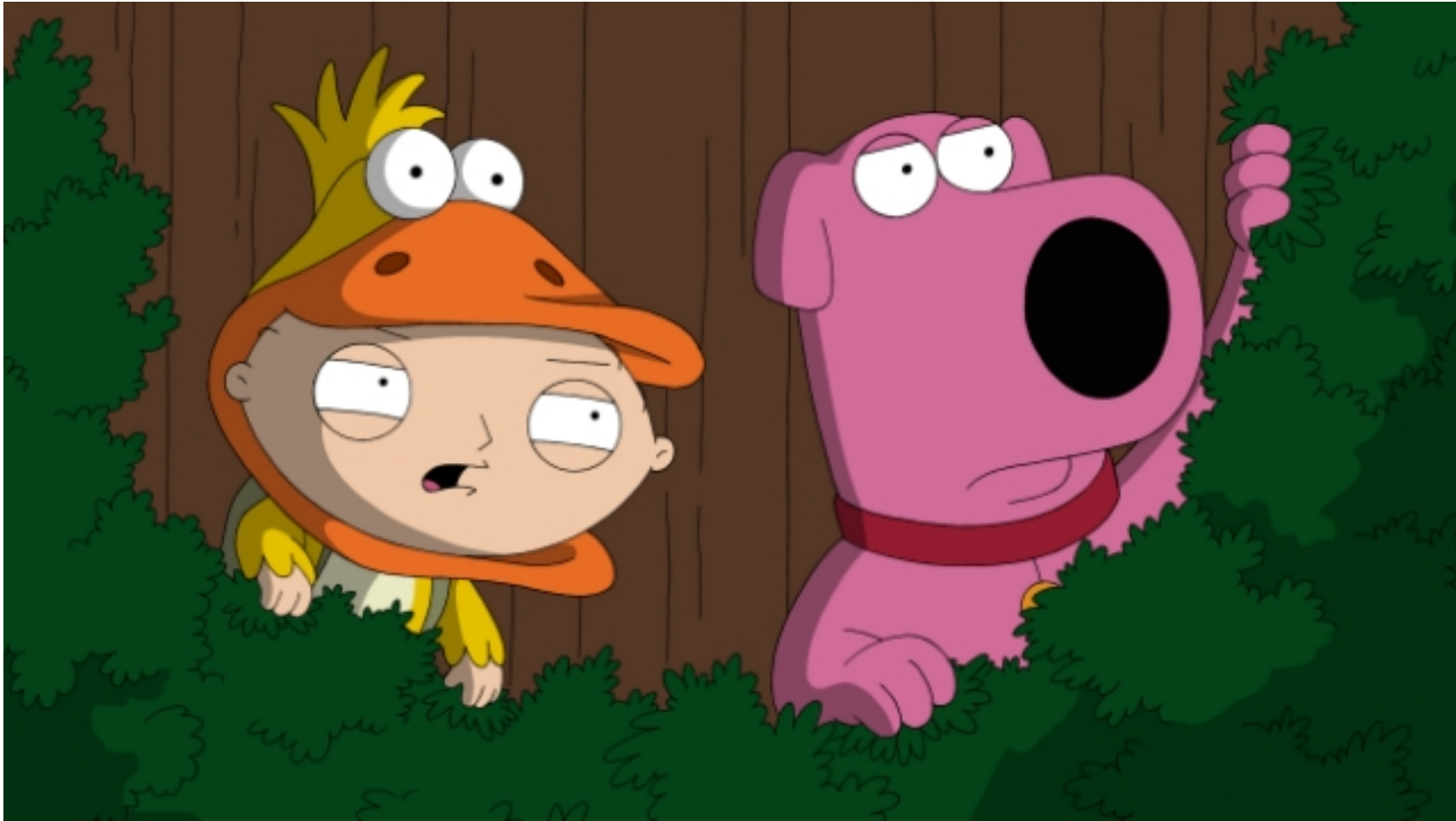
It’s a consistent episode for a consistent program, one that appears unlikely to hit the creative heights of “The Simpsons” or “Family Guy” but that still delivers solid laughs pretty much every week. It’s not particularly memorable but it’s funny and that’s all that really matters.

“Family Guy: Halloween on Spooner Street”



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

“Family Guy” isn’t exactly known for Halloween episodes but they do a pretty great job this year with one of the better outings of the year. With three equally funny plotlines that center around the holiday, it’s the best episode of the four this evening.



Family Guy: Halloween on Spooner Street

Photo credit: FOX

Stewie has never celebrated Halloween. In fact, when he first sees people in costume on Spooner Street, he thinks they’re under attack by zombies and werewolves. After Brian explains the concept to him, the pair goes trick or treating but poor Stewie gets candy-mugged by some bigger kids. Naturally, the deadliest baby in TV history seeks revenge. Meanwhile, Joe, Peter, and Quagmire get stuck in a hilarious “trick” war and Brian & Meg seek popularity at a Halloween party.

“Family Guy” has been wildly inconsistent lately but they can still knock one out of the park every once in awhile and “Halloween on Spooner Street” is one of those whiles. It’s funny, well-paced, and clever.

“American Dad: Best Little Horror House in Langley Falls”



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

I’ll admit that I gave up on “American Dad” last season. It was never a “bad” show for those first few years but it just wasn’t good enough for weekly viewing. The Halloween episode doesn’t make me long for the ones that I’ve missed nor make me regret having watched it.

“American Dad” is one of those “okay” programs I’d watch if there was more time or if there weren’t so many “better-than-okay” options for viewing time.



American Dad: Best Little Horror House in Langley Falls

Photo credit: FOX

The Smith family has held the title of the scariest haunted house on the block for the last eight years but their title has been threatened by a neighbor with a competitive horror home. Of course, Stan doesn't like competition and he ups the ante of his haunted house well past the point of sanity by including actual serial killers in the mix. In a subplot, Steve falls for Toshi's sister.

After a long day of football and three animated Halloween programs before it, "American Dad" gets the job done and provides a few laughs with some clever visual gags. Like almost every episode of the show, it's good not great. But like a kid bloated and down to the last few pieces of his candy, that's probably good enough.

Halloween episodes of "The Simpsons," "The Cleveland Show," "Family Guy," and "American Dad" air on Sunday, November 7th, 2010, starting at 7pm CST on FOX.



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