

= Matt Groening =

Matthew Abram " Matt " Groening (/ ˈɡroʊnɪŋ / GRAY @-@ ning ; born February 15 , 1954) is an American cartoonist , writer , producer , animator , and voice actor . He is the creator of the comic strip Life in Hell (1977 ? 2012) and the television series The Simpsons (1989 ? present) and Futurama (1999 ? 2003 , 2008 ? 2013) . The Simpsons has gone on to become the longest running U.S. primetime television series in history , as well as the longest running animated series and sitcom .

Groening made his first professional cartoon sale of Life in Hell to the avant @-@ garde Wet magazine in 1978 . At its peak , the cartoon was carried in 250 weekly newspapers . Life in Hell caught the attention of James L. Brooks . In 1985 , Brooks contacted Groening with the proposition of working in animation for the Fox variety show The Tracey Ullman Show . Originally , Brooks wanted Groening to adapt his Life in Hell characters for the show . Fearing the loss of ownership rights , Groening decided to create something new and came up with a cartoon family , the Simpson family , and named the members after his own parents and sisters ? while Bart was an anagram of the word brat . The shorts would be spun off into their own series The Simpsons , which has since aired 596 episodes . In 1997 , Groening and former Simpsons writer David X. Cohen developed Futurama , an animated series about life in the year 3000 , which premiered in 1999 , running for four years on Fox , then picked up by Comedy Central for additional seasons .

Groening has won 12 Primetime Emmy Awards , ten for The Simpsons and two for Futurama as well as a British Comedy Award for " outstanding contribution to comedy " in 2004 . In 2002 , he won the National Cartoonist Society Reuben Award for his work on Life in Hell . He received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on February 14 , 2012 .

= = Early life = =

Groening was born on February 15 , 1954 in Portland , Oregon , the middle of five children (older brother Mark and sister Patty were born in 1950 and 1952 , while the younger sisters Lisa and Maggie in 1956 and 1958 , respectively) . His Norwegian @-@ American mother , Margaret Ruth (née Wiggum ; March 23 , 1919 ? April 22 , 2013) , was once a teacher , and his German American father , Homer Philip Groening (December 30 , 1919 ? March 15 , 1996) , was a filmmaker , advertiser , writer and cartoonist . Homer , born in Main Centre , Saskatchewan , Canada , grew up in a Mennonite , Plautdietsch @-@ speaking family .

Matt 's grandfather , Abram Groening , was a professor at Tabor College , a Mennonite Brethren liberal arts college in Hillsboro , Kansas before moving to Albany College (now known as Lewis and Clark College) in Oregon in 1930 .

Groening grew up in Portland , and attended Ainsworth Elementary School and Lincoln High School . From 1972 to 1977 , Groening attended The Evergreen State College in Olympia , Washington , a liberal arts school that he described as " a hippie college , with no grades or required classes , that drew every weirdo in the Northwest . " He served as the editor of the campus newspaper , The Cooper Point Journal , for which he also wrote articles and drew cartoons . He befriended fellow cartoonist Lynda Barry after discovering that she had written a fan letter to Joseph Heller , one of Groening 's favorite authors , and had received a reply . Groening has credited Barry with being " probably [his] biggest inspiration . " He first became interested in cartoons after watching the Disney animated film One Hundred and One Dalmatians , and he has also cited Peanuts and its creator Charles M. Schulz as inspirations .

= = Career = =

= = = Early career = = =

In 1977 , at the age of 23 , Groening moved to Los Angeles to become a writer . He went through

what he described as " a series of lousy jobs , " including being an extra in the television movie When Every Day Was the Fourth of July , busing tables , washing dishes at a nursing home , clerking at the Hollywood Licorice Pizza record store , landscaping in a sewage treatment plant , and chauffeuring and ghostwriting for a retired Western director .

= = = Life in Hell = = =

Groening described life in Los Angeles to his friends in the form of the self @-@ published comic book Life in Hell , which was loosely inspired by the chapter " How to Go to Hell " in Walter Kaufmann 's book Critique of Religion and Philosophy . Groening distributed the comic book in the book corner of Licorice Pizza , a record store in which he worked . He made his first professional cartoon sale to the avant @-@ garde Wet magazine in 1978 . The strip , titled " Forbidden Words , " appeared in the September / October issue of that year .

Groening had gained employment at the Los Angeles Reader , a newly formed alternative newspaper , delivering papers , typesetting , editing and answering phones . He showed his cartoons to the editor , James Vowell , who was impressed and eventually gave him a spot in the paper . Life in Hell made its official debut as a comic strip in the Reader on April 25 , 1980 . Vowell also gave Groening his own weekly music column , " Sound Mix , " in 1982 . However , the column would rarely actually be about music , as he would often write about his " various enthusiasms , obsessions , pet peeves and problems " instead . In an effort to add more music to the column , he " just made stuff up , " concocting and reviewing fictional bands and non @-@ existent records . In the following week 's column , he would confess to fabricating everything in the previous column and swear that everything in the new column was true . Eventually , he was finally asked to give up the " music " column . Among the fans of the column was Harry Shearer , who would later become a voice on The Simpsons .

Life in Hell became popular almost immediately . In November 1984 , Deborah Caplan , Groening 's then @-@ girlfriend and co @-@ worker at the Reader , offered to publish " Love is Hell " , a series of relationship @-@ themed Life in Hell strips , in book form . Released a month later , the book was an underground success , selling 22 @,@ 000 copies in its first two printings . Work is Hell soon followed , also published by Caplan . Soon afterward , Caplan and Groening left and put together the Life in Hell Co . , which handled merchandising for Life in Hell . Groening also started Acme Features Syndicate , which syndicated Life in Hell , Lynda Barry and John Callahan , but now only syndicates Life in Hell . At the end of its run , Life in Hell was carried in 250 weekly newspapers and has been anthologized in a series of books , including School is Hell , Childhood is Hell , The Big Book of Hell , and The Huge Book of Hell . Although Groening has stated , " I 'll never give up the comic strip . It 's my foundation , " he announced that the June 16 , 2012 strip would mark Life in Hell 's conclusion . After Groening ended the strip , the Center for Cartoon Studies commissioned a poster that was presented to Groening in honor of his work . The poster contained tribute cartoons by 22 of Groening 's cartoonist friends who were influenced by Life in Hell .

= = = The Simpsons = = =

= = = = Creation = = = =

Life in Hell caught the eye of Hollywood writer @-@ producer and Gracie Films founder James L. Brooks , who had been shown the strip by fellow producer Polly Platt . In 1985 , Brooks contacted Groening with the proposition of working in animation on an undefined future project , which would turn out to be developing a series of short animated skits , called " bumpers , " for the Fox variety show The Tracey Ullman Show . Originally , Brooks wanted Groening to adapt his Life in Hell characters for the show . Groening feared that he would have to give up his ownership rights , and that the show would fail and would take down his comic strip with it . Groening conceived of the idea for The Simpsons in the lobby of James L. Brooks 's office and hurriedly sketched out his version of

a dysfunctional family : Homer , the overweight father ; Marge , the slim mother ; Bart , the bratty oldest child ; Lisa , the intelligent middle child ; and Maggie , the baby . Groening famously named the main Simpson characters after members of his own family : his parents , Homer and Margaret (Marge or Marjorie in full) , and his younger sisters , Lisa and Margaret (Maggie) . Claiming that it was a bit too obvious to name a character after himself , he chose the name " Bart , " an anagram of brat . However , he stresses that aside from some of the sibling rivalry , his family is nothing like the Simpsons . Groening also has an older brother and sister , Mark and Patty , and in a 1995 interview Groening divulged that Mark " is the actual inspiration for Bart. "

Maggie Groening has co @-@ written a few Simpsons books featuring her cartoon namesake .

= = = = The Tracey Ullman Show = = = =

The family was crudely drawn , because Groening had submitted basic sketches to the animators , assuming they would clean them up ; instead , they just traced over his drawings . The entire Simpson family was designed so that they would be recognizable in silhouette . When Groening originally designed Homer , he put his own initials into the character 's hairline and ear : the hairline resembled an ' M ' , and the right ear resembled a ' G ' . Groening decided that this would be too distracting though , and redesigned the ear to look normal . He still draws the ear as a ' G ' when he draws pictures of Homer for fans . Marge 's distinct beehive hairstyle was inspired by Bride of Frankenstein and the style that Margaret Groening wore during the 1960s , although her hair was never blue . Bart 's original design , which appeared in the first shorts , had spikier hair , and the spikes were of different lengths . The number was later limited to nine spikes , all of the same size . At the time Groening was primarily drawing in black and " not thinking that [Bart] would eventually be drawn in color " gave him spikes that appear to be an extension of his head . Lisa 's physical features are generally not used in other characters ; for example , in the later seasons , no character other than Maggie shares her hairline . While designing Lisa , Groening " couldn 't be bothered to even think about girls ' hair styles " . When designing Lisa and Maggie , he " just gave them this kind of spiky starfish hair style , not thinking that they would eventually be drawn in color " . Groening storyboarded and scripted every short (now known as The Simpsons shorts) , which were then animated by a team including David Silverman and Wes Archer , both of whom would later become directors on the series .

The Simpsons shorts first appeared in The Tracey Ullman Show on April 19 , 1987 . Another family member , Grampa Simpson , was introduced in the later shorts . Years later , during the early seasons of The Simpsons , when it came time to give Grampa a first name , Groening says he refused to name him after his own grandfather , Abraham Groening , leaving it to other writers to choose a name . By coincidence , they chose Abraham , unaware that it was the name of Groening 's grandfather .

= = = = Half @-@ hour = = = =

Although The Tracey Ullman Show was not a big hit , the popularity of the shorts led to a half @-@ hour spin @-@ off in 1989 . A team of production companies adapted The Simpsons into a half @-@ hour series for the Fox Broadcasting Company . The team included what is now the Klasky Csupo animation house . James L. Brooks negotiated a provision in the contract with the Fox network that prevented Fox from interfering with the show 's content . Groening said his goal in creating the show was to offer the audience an alternative to what he called " the mainstream trash " that they were watching . The half @-@ hour series premiered on December 17 , 1989 with " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , a Christmas special . " Some Enchanted Evening " was the first full @-@ length episode produced , but it did not broadcast until May 1990 , as the last episode of the first season , because of animation problems .

The series quickly became a worldwide phenomenon , to the surprise of many . Groening said : " Nobody thought The Simpsons was going to be a big hit . It sneaked up on everybody . " The Simpsons was co @-@ developed by Groening , Brooks , and Sam Simon , a writer @-@ producer

with whom Brooks had worked on previous projects . Groening and Simon , however , did not get along and were often in conflict over the show ; Groening once described their relationship as " very contentious . " Simon eventually left the show in 1993 over creative differences .

Like the main family members , several characters from the show have names that were inspired by people , locations or films . The name " Wiggum " for police chief Chief Wiggum is Groening 's mother 's maiden name . The names of a few other characters were taken from major street names in Groening 's hometown of Portland , Oregon , including Flanders , Lovejoy , Powell , Quimby and Kearney . Despite common fan belief that Sideshow Bob Terwilliger was named after SW Terwilliger Boulevard in Portland , he was actually named after the character Dr. Terwilliker from the film The 5 @, @ 000 Fingers of Dr. T.

Although Groening has pitched a number of spin @-@ offs from The Simpsons , those attempts have been unsuccessful . In 1994 , Groening and other Simpsons producers pitched a live @-@ action spin @-@ off about Krusty the Clown (with Dan Castellaneta playing the lead role) , but were unsuccessful in getting it off the ground . Groening has also pitched " Young Homer " and a spin @-@ off about the non @-@ Simpsons citizens of Springfield .

In 1995 , Groening got into a major disagreement with Brooks and other Simpsons producers over " A Star Is Burns " , a crossover episode with The Critic , an animated show also produced by Brooks and staffed with many former Simpsons crew members . Groening claimed that he feared viewers would " see it as nothing but a pathetic attempt to advertise The Critic at the expense of The Simpsons , " and was concerned about the possible implication that he had created or produced The Critic . He requested his name be taken off the episode .

Groening is credited with writing or co @-@ writing the episodes " Some Enchanted Evening " , " The Telltale Head " , " Colonel Homer " and " 22 Short Films About Springfield " , as well as The Simpsons Movie , released in 2007 . He has had several cameo appearances in the show , with a speaking role in the episode " My Big Fat Geek Wedding " . He currently serves at The Simpsons as an executive producer and creative consultant .

= = = Futurama = = =

After spending a few years researching science fiction , Groening got together with Simpsons writer / producer David X. Cohen (still known as David S. Cohen at the time) in 1997 and developed Futurama , an animated series about life in the year 3000 . By the time they pitched the series to Fox in April 1998 , Groening and Cohen had composed many characters and storylines ; Groening claimed they had gone " overboard " in their discussions . Groening described trying to get the show on the air as " by far the worst experience of [his] grown @-@ up life . " The show premiered on March 28 , 1999 . Groening 's writing credits for the show are for the premiere episode , " Space Pilot 3000 " (co @-@ written with Cohen) , " Rebirth " (story) and " In @-@ A @-@ Gadda @-@ Da @-@ Leela " (story) .

After four years on the air , the show was canceled by Fox . In a situation similar to Family Guy , however , strong DVD sales and very stable ratings on Adult Swim brought Futurama back to life . When Comedy Central began negotiating for the rights to air Futurama reruns , Fox suggested that there was a possibility of also creating new episodes . When Comedy Central committed to sixteen new episodes , it was decided that four straight @-@ to @-@ DVD films ? Bender 's Big Score (2007) , The Beast with a Billion Backs (2008) , Bender 's Game (2008) and Into the Wild Green Yonder (2009) ? would be produced .

Since no new Futurama projects were in production , the movie Into the Wild Green Yonder was designed to stand as the Futurama series finale . However , Groening had expressed a desire to continue the Futurama franchise in some form , including as a theatrical film . In an interview with CNN , Groening said that " we have a great relationship with Comedy Central and we would love to do more episodes for them , but I don 't know ... We 're having discussions and there is some enthusiasm but I can 't tell if it 's just me . " Comedy Central commissioned an additional 26 new episodes , and began airing them in 2010 . The show continued in to 2013 , before Comedy Central announced in April 2013 that they would not be renewing it beyond its seventh season . The final

episode aired on September 4 , 2013 .

= = = Other pursuits = = =

In 1994 , Groening formed Bongo Comics (named after the character Bongo from Life in Hell) with Steve Vance , Cindy Vance and Bill Morrison , which publishes comic books based on The Simpsons and Futurama (including Futurama Simpsons Infinitely Secret Crossover Crisis , a crossover between the two) , as well as a few original titles . According to Groening , the goal with Bongo is to " [try] to bring humor into the fairly grim comic book market . " He also formed Zongo Comics in 1995 , an imprint of Bongo that published comics for more mature readers , which included three issues of Mary Fleener 's Fleener and seven issues of his close friend Gary Panter 's Jimbo comics .

Groening is known for his eclectic taste in music . His favorite band is Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention and his favorite album is Trout Mask Replica by Captain Beefheart (which was produced by Zappa) . He guest @-@ edited Da Capo Press 's Best Music Writing 2003 and curated a US All Tomorrow 's Parties music festival in 2003 . He illustrated the cover of Frank Zappa 's posthumous album Frank Zappa Plays the Music of Frank Zappa : A Memorial Tribute (1996) . In May 2010 , he curated another edition of All Tomorrow 's Parties in Minehead , England . He also plays the drums in the all @-@ author rock and roll band The Rock Bottom Remainders (although he is listed as the cowbell player) , whose other members include Dave Barry , Ridley Pearson , Scott Turow , Amy Tan , James McBride , Mitch Albom , Roy Blount Jr . , Stephen King , Kathi Kamen Goldmark , Sam Barry and Greg Iles . In July 2013 , Groening co @-@ authored Hard Listening (2013) with the rest of the Rock Bottom Remainders (published by Coliloquy , LLC) .

On January 15 , 2016 , it was announced that Groening is in talks with Netflix to develop a new animated series . Netflix is considering giving the series a two @-@ season order , totalling 20 episodes .

= = Personal life = =

Groening and Deborah Caplan married in 1986 and had two sons together , Homer (who goes by Will) and Abe , both of whom Groening occasionally portrays as rabbits in Life in Hell . The couple divorced in 1999 after thirteen years of marriage . In 2011 , Groening married Argentinian artist Agustina Picasso after a four @-@ year relationship , and became stepfather to her daughter Camille . In May 2013 , Picasso gave birth to Nathaniel Philip Picasso Groening , named after writer Nathanael West . She joked that " his godfather is SpongeBob 's creator Stephen Hillenburg " . Matt is the brother @-@ in @-@ law of Hey Arnold ! and Dinosaur Train creator , Craig Bartlett , who is married to Groening 's sister , Lisa . Arnold used to appear in Simpsons Illustrated .

Groening identifies himself as agnostic and a liberal and has often made campaign contributions to Democratic Party candidates . His first cousin , Laurie Monnes Anderson , is a member of the Oregon State Senate representing eastern Multnomah County .

= = Filmography = =

= = = Film = = =

= = = Television = = =

= = = Video games = = =

== = Music video == =

== = As a crew member == =

== Awards ==

Groening has been nominated for 25 Emmy Awards and has won twelve : ten for The Simpsons and two for Futurama in the " Outstanding Animated Program (for programming one hour or less) " category . Groening received the 2002 National Cartoonist Society Reuben Award , and had been nominated for the same award in 2000 . He received a British Comedy Award for " outstanding contribution to comedy " in 2004 . In 2007 , he was ranked fourth (and highest American by birth) in a list of the " top 100 living geniuses " , published by British newspaper The Daily Telegraph . He received the 2,459th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on February 14 , 2012 .