

= Starvin ' Marvin ( South Park ) =

" Starvin ' Marvin " is the eighth episode in the first season of the American animated television series South Park . It first aired on Comedy Central in the United States on November 19 , 1997 . In the episode , Cartman , Kenny , Kyle and Stan send money to an African charity hoping to get a sports watch , but are instead sent an Ethiopian child whom they dub " Starvin ' Marvin " . Later , Cartman is accidentally sent to Ethiopia , where he learns activist Sally Struthers is hoarding the charity 's food for herself . In an accompanying subplot , after genetically engineered turkeys attack South Park residents , Chef rallies the residents to fight back , in a parody of the film Braveheart .

The episode was written and directed by series co @-@ creator Trey Parker . " Starvin ' Marvin " was the first South Park Thanksgiving @-@ themed episode . The episode simultaneously served as a satire on American indifference toward impoverished countries and the humanitarianism industry .

The episode received generally positive reviews and several commentators have described it as a classic South Park episode . According to Nielsen Media Research , it was viewed by about 2 @.@ 2 million households during its original broadcast , which at the time was roughly eight times Comedy Central 's average viewership . Parker and Stone said they were unhappy with the turkey subplot , which they wrote only because they felt obligated to include a B story . Sally Struthers was reportedly deeply offended by her portrayal in the episode . In addition to Starvin ' Marvin , who became a popular minor character , the episode introduced regular characters Kyle 's father Gerald Broflovski and Kenny 's family members Stuart , Carol and Kevin McCormick .

= = Plot = =

After seeing a commercial about starving children in Africa , Cartman , Stan , Kenny and Kyle send money to Sally Struthers ' charity organization , the Christian Children 's Fund . They do not care about the cause , but want the free sports watch that comes with the sponsorship . However , due to a miscommunication , an Ethiopian boy is delivered to the boys instead of the watch . Although initially shocked , the four boys befriend him , and Cartman names the boy Starvin ' Marvin ( " Marvin " being given to him by the apparent pronunciation of the name when he was talking in his native language ) . Meanwhile , mobs of wild turkeys begin attacking and killing South Park residents . Mad scientist Dr. Mephisto tries to warn Mayor McDaniels that genetically engineered turkeys he had been breeding to feed to the poor have gone crazy and are now attacking humans . Mephisto is instead ignored and ridiculed by McDaniels .

The boys take Marvin to an all @-@ you @-@ can @-@ eat buffet , where he is shocked by how much food the townsfolk consume compared to his home country , and by how wasteful Cartman is with his food . Back at school , Mr. Garrison announces the food drive is a failure because students have brought in only a few cans of creamed corn . The boys present Marvin to the class during show and tell , after which Mr. Garrison and Principal Victoria tell the boys they will have to call Red Cross and send Marvin home . Meanwhile , Dr. Mephisto shows Chef that the turkey DNA is growing so rapidly that the turkeys might take over the world if they are not stopped .

The FBI arrives to take Marvin back to Ethiopia , but Marvin tricks them into taking Cartman instead . Cartman , who had previously cared little for the impoverished in Africa , is unable to bear the lack of food and poor living conditions there ; furthermore , he attempts to convince the Red Cross there that he 's not one of the Africans , but it fails . While praying to God in Addis Ababa , Cartman says he is sorry he made fun of poor people . He eventually finds a Red Cross shack , where Sally Struthers is hoarding all the food meant for charity . After a brief argument , Cartman exposes all of Miss Struthers 's hoarding of the food supply to the Ethiopians , who then take control of the food supply .

Back in South Park , Chef rallies the townspeople ( in a parody of Braveheart ) to fight the genetically engineered turkeys ; humorously , one of the turkeys also rallies the other turkeys to fight the townspeople . A massive battle ensues in which Kenny is killed ( his eye is poked and gouged out ) , but eventually the South Park residents kill all the turkeys and claim victory . The FBI returns

Cartman to South Park and takes Marvin home , but not before he brings the bodies of the dead turkeys back to Ethiopia for everyone to eat . Marvin is then hailed as a hero by his people while they pass Struthers being bound and gagged over a fire .

In the end , back in South Park , Kenny 's family give their Thanksgiving blessings as they prepare to eat a can of green beans , but realize afterward that they do not have a can opener .

= = Production = =

" Starvin ' Marvin " was written by Trey Parker , Matt Stone and Pam Brady . Directed by Parker , it was the first official South Park Thanksgiving episode . Parker and Stone said " Starvin ' Marvin " , like other holiday episodes , proved difficult to make because they felt a responsibility to constantly top other previous holiday shows . Stone provided the voice of Marvin . According to the official South Park website , the character was not named after the Starvin ' Marvin 's brand of American gas stations , and that the similarity between the two names is just a coincidence . Jerry Seinfeld , comedian and star of the popular sitcom Seinfeld , contacted Parker and Stone and asked if he could record a guest voice performance because he was a fan of the show . Parker and Stone offered Seinfeld the throwaway background part of one of the turkeys , but Seinfeld 's agent was " a bit put off " by the offer and did not accept .

The episode was partially inspired by the commercials for the Christian Children 's Fund , in which Sally Struthers encourages viewers to donate money to provide food for starving children in Africa . Parker said he did not really believe Struthers was hoarding food from the charity , but he came up with the concept because he found it funny that such an obese woman would make a public plea for food for others . Parker said he had always wondered how a starving African child would react if they were taken to a large buffet dinner at an American restaurant , with " people leaving tons of food on their plates " , which served as further inspiration for the episode . Parker and Stone originally planned for Struthers to die at the end of the episode and have the African children eat her and live off her fat ; Comedy Central executives told the duo they could not kill Struthers , although celebrities have been killed off in subsequent episodes without any objections from the network .

Parker and Stone were unhappy with the turkey attack subplot , which they felt " never really went anywhere " and ended abruptly without any satisfying conclusion . They nevertheless included it because they felt obligated to include a B story , since every episode in the season so far had included one . Later in the series , they said they realized this was not necessary and made many episodes without a B story . Although the duo liked the " payoff " of the Starvin ' Marvin main plot , they did not know how to end the turkey subplot , so they simply had the characters kill all the turkeys and claim that there were none left ; they decided this sudden ending was the funniest possible option . Stone said of the subplot , " The turkeys were just an excuse to have the Braveheart sequence . " The animators enjoyed creating the turkey battle scene , which was designed to be shown in widescreen aspect ratio while the rest of the episode was animated normally . However , the animation proved to be very difficult and took a long time to do because it involved a larger number of characters and animals in one scene than had ever been featured previously in the show . Some of the characters in the far background were animated as gray and shadowy , which Parker said was not so much a visual effect as it was a " lighting effect meaning we didn 't want to draw all these people " .

In addition to Starvin ' Marvin himself , the episode included the first appearances of several regular characters : Kyle 's father Gerald Broflovski , as well as Stuart , Carol and Kevin McCormick , father , mother and brother ( respectively ) of Kenny , who were portrayed as incredibly poor and unhygienic . In a continuity error , the couple killed by the turkeys at Stark 's Pond can be seen alive and unharmed during the turkey battle scene .

= = Themes = =

Psychologists Gilbert Reyes and Gerard Jacobs have cited " Starvin ' Marvin " as one example of popular culture voicing criticisms of humanitarianism " as an overblown industry leeching off others '

suffering and harming its purported beneficiaries " . The episode also highlights America 's consumerist society and American indifference toward impoverished countries . The moral of the episode , explained by Stan in the final scene , encourages viewers to see suffering citizens of impoverished countries as real people , rather than images on television screens , which tend to make the viewers feel detached and alienated from them .

" Starvin ' Marvin " explores and satirizes gluttony in the US , particularly through its unflattering portrayal of Sally Struthers , who gorges on donated food meant for starving children . The greed and wastefulness shown in the buffet scene , as well as Cartman 's overall greediness and lack of understanding regarding the plight of starving African children , has been said to demonstrate an over @-@ abundance and decadence typically associated with Americans . The destructive rampage of the turkeys provides a commentary on genetic engineering . Scott Calef , a philosophy professor who studies popular culture , said the destruction sown by the turkeys , despite the best of intentions by Dr. Mephisto , are indicative of the unpredictable nature and ethical ambiguity of the use of genetic engineering for the betterment of humankind .

= = Cultural references and impact = =

Starvin ' Marvin proved to be a popular minor character , even though he would only appear in one more episode , the third season episode " Starvin ' Marvin in Space " . The character was later featured in South Park Rally , a 2000 racing video game from developer Acclaim , in which Marvin races the other characters in a motorized wheat sack . Marvin is also featured in South Park 10 : The Game , a platform mobile game featuring a number of South Park characters . Eric Cartman 's line , " That 's a bad Starvin ' Marvin ! " , became one of the most popular lines from the first season of the show . Starvin ' Marvin is from the African nation Ethiopia , which experienced two famines in the mid @-@ 1980s . The American authorities who address his parents identify his family 's surname as " Click Click Derk " .

The scenes in which Chef , and later the lead turkey , don blue and white war paint and speak inspirational words to their armies are a parody of Braveheart , the 1995 Mel Gibson @-@ directed film about Scottish historical hero William Wallace . Parker said it was the first of many times a film was spoofed in a South Park episode , even though both said they enjoyed Braveheart . During class , Mr. Garrison incorrectly tells the children the internationally known English pop singer Engelbert Humperdinck was the first man to walk on the moon . Also in the classroom , when it is suggested some poor people would rather die than go to a poorhouse , Cartman says , " Well then perhaps they should ? and decrease the surplus population ! " The line is lifted word @-@ for @-@ word from the Charles Dickens novella A Christmas Carol , prompting Mr. Garrison to respond , " Okay , kids , that 's enough Dickens for one day . " Kyle incorrectly tells Stan that Sally Struthers appeared on Full House , an American sitcom that ran from the late 1980s to early 1990s ; she actually starred in the 1970s series All in the Family . When Dr. Mephisto asks Chef to look into his microscope , Chef says he sees " an extreme close @-@ up of Vanessa Redgrave 's private parts " , a reference to the Academy Award @-@ winning English actress . At the end of the episode , Stan said it is important to remember the images of starving children on television are " just as real as you or I " . Kyle says by that logic , MacGyver is a real person too , a reference to the secret agent protagonist from the 1980s television series of the same name .

Tom Vogt , who served as the editor of South Park for several years , was inspired to join the show after watching a bootleg copy of " Starvin ' Marvin " . He had never seen the show before , but was so impressed by the episode he decided to drive to Colorado and seek a job with Parker and Stone . He was hired as the show 's editor after contacting one of the South Park animators who used to work for the same company as he had .

= = Release and reception = =

" Starvin ' Marvin " first aired in the United States on Comedy Central on November 19 , 1997 . In its original American broadcast , " Starvin ' Marvin " received a Nielsen rating of 4 @.@ 8 , meaning the

episode was seen by about 2 @. @ 2 million households in the US . Television journalists described the rating as " astonishing " by Comedy Central standards ; at the time , the network averaged a 0 @. @ 6 rating ( 276 @, @ 000 households ) during prime time , and prior to South Park , the channel 's highest rating was a 2 @. @ 7 ( 1 @. @ 24 million households ) for the second season premiere of Absolutely Fabulous . Several reviewers have described " Starvin ' Marvin " as one of South Park 's " classic episodes " . Parker said the emotional moment when Starvin ' Marvin returned home with all the turkeys made his mother cry , marking the first time he and Stone heard of an emotional reaction to their show .

After the episode aired , Parker and Stone received feedback that audiences felt " Starvin ' Marvin " was especially unkind to Struthers . Although they did not speak to her themselves , the duo received word that Struthers was a fan of the show until " Starvin ' Marvin " aired , after which she was very upset and reportedly reacted emotionally over her portrayal . Struthers was particularly saddened by the fact that her character steals food from the same starving children she had been working to help . Parker and Stone were slightly remorseful when they learned of her reaction and have said they did not have anything against Struthers personally . Nevertheless , Struthers was portrayed in an even less flattering way in the third season episode " Starvin ' Marvin in Space " as a Jabba the Hutt @-@ like creature . In a DVD commentary track , Parker said of Struthers , " Dude , you 're really setting yourself up if you 're going to be that fat and go on the air talking about [ starving children ] . ... We don 't think she 's a bad person , she 's probably nice to try to do this , but cut down on the Twinkies a little bit before going on the air . "

Tom Carson , television critic for The Village Voice , praised the episode , which he said " featured some amazing sick jokes about American affluence and obliviousness " . Dianne Williamson of the Telegram & Gazette praised " Starvin ' Marvin " for taking a chance with the source material , and said , " Often I 'm in awe at the courage of these [ South Park ] creators . " The Advertiser of Lafayette , Louisiana , called the episode " hysterical " and particularly praised its satire of American consumerism . The St. Paul Pioneer Press described the episode as " hilarious " and said , " We know we shouldn 't laugh , but we can 't help it . " Vicki Englund of The Courier @-@ Mail complimented the " really bizarre storyline " and the moral of the episode , and especially praised the jokes about Struthers : " It might be a good idea not to eat during the hilarious second episode . Enough said . "

Vern Perry , a reviewer with The Orange County Register , called " Starvin ' Marvin " his favorite South Park episode . The " Starvin ' Marvin " episode was featured in a 1998 Chicago Tribune list of the top ten reasons for the popularity of South Park . The Chicago Tribune also included " Starvin ' Marvin " in a 2003 list of the top ten funniest episodes . Bill Ward , of the Star Tribune , described " Starvin Marvin " as Cartman 's " finest half @-@ hour " . Not all reviews were positive ; Boston Globe writer Matthew Gilbert , who described South Park as immature and low @-@ brow , called " Starvin ' Marvin " a particularly " uncuddly episode " . Brian Boyd of The Irish Times criticized the episode for making jokes at the expense of starving African children .

" Starvin ' Marvin " was released , along with eleven other episodes , in a three @-@ DVD set in November 1998 . It was included in the third volume , which also included the episodes " Mecha @-@ Streisand " , " Mr. Hankey , the Christmas Poo " and " Tom 's Rhinoplasty " . " Starvin ' Marvin " was also one of six episodes included on a 1998 VHS called " South Park Festival Special " , which included " Mr. Hankey , the Christmas Poo " , " Merry Christmas , Charlie Manson ! " , " Mr. Hankey 's Christmas Classics " , " Korn 's Groovy Pirate Ghost Mystery " and " Pinkeye " . The episode , along with the other twelve from the first season , was also included in the DVD release " South Park : The Complete First Season " , which was released on November 12 , 2002 . Parker and Stone recorded commentary tracks for each episode , but they were not included with the DVDs due to " standards " issues with some of the statements ; Parker and Stone refused to allow the tracks to be edited and censored , so they were released in a CD separate from the DVDs . In 2008 , Parker and Stone made " Starvin ' Marvin " and all South Park episodes available to watch for free on the show 's official website , " South Park Studios " .