

= Cartman Gets an Anal Probe =

" Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " is the first episode of the animated television series South Park . It first aired on Comedy Central in the United States on August 13 , 1997 . The episode introduces child protagonists Eric Cartman , Kyle Broflovski , Stan Marsh and Kenny McCormick , who attempt to rescue Kyle 's younger brother Ike from being abducted by aliens .

At the time of the writing of the episode , South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone did not yet have a series contract with Comedy Central . Short on money , the creators animated the episode using paper cutout stop motion technique , similar to the short films that were the precursors to the series . " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " remains the only South Park episode animated largely without the use of computer technology .

Part of a reaction to the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States , South Park is deliberately offensive . Much of the show 's humor , and of " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " , arises from the juxtaposition of the seeming innocence of childhood and the violent , crude behavior exhibited by the main characters . The episode also exemplifies the carnivalesque , which includes humor , bodily excess , linguistic games that challenge official discourse , and the inversion of social structures .

Initial reviews of the episode were generally negative ; critics singled out the gratuitous obscenity of the show for particular scorn . Regarding the amount of obscenity in the episode , Parker later commented that they felt " pressure " to live up to the earlier shorts which first made the duo popular . Critics also compared South Park unfavorably with what they felt were more complex and nuanced animated shows , such as Beavis and Butt @-@ Head and The Simpsons .

= = Plot = =

As Kyle , Stan , Kenny and Cartman wait for the school bus , Kyle 's little brother , Ike , tries to follow Kyle to school ; Kyle tells Ike he can 't come to school with him . Cartman tells the boys about a dream he had the previous night about being abducted by aliens . The others try to convince him the events did happen and that the aliens are called " visitors " , but Cartman refuses to believe them . Chef pulls up in his car and asks if the boys saw the alien spaceship the previous evening , inadvertently confirming Cartman 's " dream " , and relays stories of alien anal probes (which throughout the episode Cartman denies he experienced) . After Chef leaves , the school bus picks up the boys , and (looking out the back window) they watch in horror as the visitors abduct Ike ; Kyle spends the rest of the episode attempting to rescue him .

At school , Cartman begins farting fire , and Kyle unsuccessfully tries to convince his teacher , Mr. Garrison , to excuse him from class to find his brother . When Chef learns that Kyle 's brother was abducted and sees a machine emerge from Cartman 's anus , he helps the boys escape from school by pulling the fire alarm . Once outside , Cartman reiterates that his abduction was only a dream , when suddenly he 's hit by a beam , causing him to begin singing and dancing . Soon afterward , a spaceship appears . Kyle throws a stone and the spaceship fires back , propelling Kenny into the road . As he gets back up , he is trampled over by a herd of cows , but survives . Then , a police car runs him over , killing him .

Stan and Kyle meet Wendy at Stark 's Pond , where she suggests using the machine lodged inside Cartman to contact the visitors . To lure them back , the children tie Cartman to a tree and , the next time he farts , a massive satellite dish emerges from his anus . The alien spaceship arrives and Ike jumps to safety . In the meantime , the visitors communicate with the cows in the area , having found them to be the most intelligent species on the planet . Cartman is again abducted by the aliens and returns to the bus stop the following day with pinkeye .

= = Background = =

The origins of South Park go back to 1992 when Trey Parker and Matt Stone , students at the University of Colorado , created a Christmas @-@ related animated short commonly known as "

Jesus vs. Frosty ". The low @-@ budget , crudely made animation featured prototypes for the main characters of South Park . Fox Broadcasting Company executive Brian Graden saw the film and in 1995 commissioned Parker and Stone to create a second short that he could send to his friends as a video Christmas card . Titled The Spirit of Christmas , also known as " Jesus vs. Santa " , the short more closely resembled the style of the later series . The video was popular and widely shared , both by duplication and over the Internet . After the shorts began to generate interest for a possible television series , Parker and Stone developed a concept based on the town of South Park and the characters Stan , Kyle , Kenny , and Cartman . Later , Comedy Central expressed interest in the series , and Parker and Stone created a pilot episode for the network .

South Park was part of a reaction to the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States , in which issues such as Murphy Brown 's motherhood , Tinky Winky 's sexuality , and the Simpsons ' family values were extensively debated . The culture wars , and political correctness in particular , were driven by the belief that relativism was becoming more relevant to daily life and thus what were perceived as " traditional " and reliable values were losing their place in American society . South Park , one scholar explains , " made a name for itself as rude , crude , vulgar , offensive , and potentially dangerous " within this debate about values . Its critics argued that Stan , Kyle , Cartman , and Kenny were poor role models for children while its supporters celebrated the show 's defense of free speech .

= = Production = =

The pilot episode was written by South Park creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker , and was directed by Parker ; it was made on a budget of \$ 300 @,@ 000 . Similarly to Parker and Stone 's Christmas shorts , the original pilot was animated entirely with traditional cut paper stop motion animation techniques . This laborious process involved creating hundreds of construction paper cutouts ? including individual mouth shapes , and many of the characters in several different sizes ? , and photographing every frame of the show with an overhead camera , to the dialog that had been recorded earlier . Assistants helped with the cutting and pasting of the cutouts , while the animation was primarily done by Parker , Stone , and South Park animation director Eric Stough . The episode took between three and three and a half months to complete , and animation took place in a small room at Celluloid Studios , in Denver , Colorado , during the summer of 1996 . Additional animation techniques involved creating the starry night sky by putting holes into a black posterboard and illuminating it from behind , and having the pooling of Kenny 's blood simulated by drawing an initial dot with a red marker pen , and drawing more to it with every frame . The characters who are not speaking rarely move , saving time in the animation process .

The finished pilot was 28 minutes long , which was too long to air , as Parker and Stone did not realize that more time should be allowed for television commercials during the half @-@ hour spot reserved for an episode on Comedy Central . In order to shorten the episode to 22 minutes , the creators cut out about ten minutes worth of material , and added back another three minutes , in order to tie up the changed storyline . For example , in the original pilot , Cartman farts fire because some older kids feed him hot tamales , while in the shortened version , he does so because of the alien probe implanted in him . Other scenes focused more heavily on the character Pip . The scene where he is introduced was later inserted into the fifth episode of the series , " An Elephant Makes Love to a Pig " , in its original , cutout animation form . The storyline additions were created with the use of computer animation , and all subsequent episodes of the series have been computer animated . While the creators ' aim was for the computer animation to visually simulate the cardboard cutout animation , the techniques were not perfected until later in the series , and as a result , the two styles of animation are easily distinguishable in the pilot .

The idea for the town of South Park came from the real Colorado basin of the same name where , according to the creators , a lot of folklore and news reports originated about " UFO sightings , and cattle mutilations , and Bigfoot sightings . " Parker and Stone 's original intentions were to have the alien presence feature more frequently in the plot of subsequent episodes , but eventually they decided against this , as they did not want the show to look like a parody of the popular science

fiction television series *The X @-@ Files* . However , the crew started hiding aliens in the background in many *South Park* episodes as Easter eggs for fans , a tradition that goes back to Parker and Stone 's first major collaboration , the 1993 independent film *Cannibal ! The Musical* .

Regarding the language in the episode , Parker has said that they " felt the pressure to live up to *Spirit of Christmas* " , which contains a lot of obscenities , and as a result , they " tried to push things ... maybe further than we should " . In particular , Parker said that they felt the need " to put in dildo and every word we can get away with . " In contrast , they allowed subsequent episodes to " be more natural " , saying that those episodes are " more about bizarre happenings and making fun of things that are taboo " , " without just throwing a bunch of dirty words in there . "

" *Cartman Gets an Anal Probe* " received poor results from test audiences and Comedy Central executives were uncertain whether to order additional episodes of the show . However , as the two original Christmas shorts , " *Jesus vs. Frosty* " and " *Jesus vs. Santa* " , continued to produce Internet buzz , the network paid Parker and Stone to write one more episode . In writing " *Weight Gain 4000* " , the duo sought to give the network an idea of how each episode could differ from the others . The network liked the script and agreed to commit to a series when Parker and Stone said they would not write another individual episode until Comedy Central signed off on a season of at least six episodes .

= = Themes = =

Describing the general tone of the show , Teri Fittell of *The New Zealand Herald* explains that " *South Park* is a vicious social satire that works by spotlighting not the immorality of these kids but their amorality , and contrasting it with the conniving hypocrisy of the adults who surround them . " Often compared to *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* , *South Park* , according to Tom Lappin of *Scotland on Sunday* , " has a truly malevolent streak that sets it apart " from these shows ; he cites the repeated death of Kenny as an example .

The humor of the show comes from the " disparity " between the " cute " appearance of the characters and their " crude " behavior . However , Parker and Stone said in an early interview that the show 's language is realistic . " There are so many shows where little kids are good and sweet , and it 's just not real ... Don 't people remember what they were like in third grade ? We were little bastards . " Frederic Biddle of *The Boston Globe* notes how the show " constantly plays on its grade @-@ school aesthetic for shock value , with great success " , arguing that at its height , it is " more a profane ' *Peanuts* ' than a downsized ' *Beavis and Butt @-@ Head* . ' " He points , for example , to Kenny , who symbolically represents the voiceless underclass , which is eliminated in each episode . Claire Bickley of the *Toronto Sun* explains that " The show captures that mix of innocence and viciousness that can co @-@ exist in kids that age " , that " the boys are fascinated by bodily functions " , and that they " mimic adult behavior and language " . For example , Kyle instructs Stan and Wendy to " make sweet love down by the fire " , a phrase he learns from Chef . In a light @-@ hearted study of the humor of flatulence , Jim Dawson explains how the rise of adult animation in the 1990s allowed television to indulge in such humor with *The Ren & Stimpy Show* , *The Simpsons* , and *Beavis and Butt @-@ Head* . Beginning with " *Cartman Gets an Anal Probe* " , *South Park* builds on this tradition .

The episode employs what literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin calls the carnivalesque . As Ethan Thompson explains in his article , " *Good Demo , Bad Taste : South Park as Carnavalesque Satire* " , the style consists of four crucial elements : humor , bodily excess , linguistic games that challenge official discourse , and the inversion of social structures . Cartman 's body ? his obesity and his inability to control his farting ? is supposed to exemplify the grotesque . The boys swear throughout the episode , using words and phrases such as " fat ass " and " dildo " , challenging the boundaries of appropriate language . Finally , the social structure of the town is inverted , as the episode focuses on the knowledge that the four boys have of the aliens as opposed to the ignorant and incompetent adults . Moreover , the aliens perceive the cows as more intelligent than the humans , inverting the species order .

South Park tends to employ large @-@ scale musical numbers in its episodes , often parodying

1930s cartoons . For example , Cartman sings part of " I Love to Singa " , from the cartoon of the same name , when he is struck by a beam from the alien ship .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

The episode was broadcast for the first time at 10 pm EDT in the United States on August 13 , 1997 on Comedy Central . South Park was originally broadcast during prime time after Seinfeld on Canada 's Global TV , with objectionable material cut from the show . The " dildo " jokes were removed from the pilot as well as two scenes in which Kyle kicks his baby brother , Ike . After complaints from viewers , the series was moved to midnight on October 17 , 1997 and the deleted material was restored . Almost a year after its original air date , the episode was broadcast for the first time in Britain (outside of satellite television) on July 10 , 1998 on Channel 4 . A station representative said " It 's for the audience coming back from the pub with a curry . "

" Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " initially earned a Nielsen rating of 1 @. @ 3 , translating to 980 @, @ 000 viewers , which is considered high for a cable program in the United States . In April 2007 , The New Zealand Herald called the first episode " a huge success " ; however , reviews at the time of the episode 's broadcast were generally negative , most focusing on the low , obscene comedy . Bruce Fretts of Entertainment Weekly thought poorly of the writing and characters , stating that " If only the kids ' jokes were as fresh as their mouths " and " It might help if the South Park kids had personalities , but they 're as one @- @ dimensional as the show 's cut @- @ and @- @ paste animation " . Tim Goodman of The San Francisco Examiner acknowledged that many viewers will find South Park " vile , rude , sick , potentially dangerous , childish and mean @- @ spirited " . He argued that viewers " have to come into ' South Park ' with a bent for irony , sarcasm , anger and an understanding that cardboard cut @- @ out animation of foul @- @ mouthed third @- @ graders is a tragically underused comic premise . "

Calling the series " sophomoric , gross , and unfunny " , Hal Boedeker of the Orlando Sentinel believed that this episode " makes such a bad impression that it 's hard to get on the show 's strange wavelength . " Ann Hodges of the Houston Chronicle considered the show " made by and for childish grown @- @ ups " and for " adults who enjoy kid shows " . Seeing the show as the inheritor of The Simpsons and Beavis and Butt @- @ Head , Ginia Bellafante of Time noted its failure to cohere and considered the show " devoid of subtext " . Caryn James of The New York Times commented that the series " succeeds best in small touches " but " seems to have a future " . In a generally negative review of the first three episodes of the series , Tom Shales of The Washington Post wrote that " Most of the alleged humor on the premiere is self @- @ conscious and self @- @ congratulatory in its vulgarity : flatulence jokes , repeated use of the word ' dildo ' (in the literal as well as pejorative sense) and a general air of malicious unpleasantness . " In one of the few generally positive reviews , Eric Mink of the Daily News praised the South Park universe and the " distinct , interesting characters " within it . He singled out Cartman , calling him " the most vibrant of the bunch " , describing him as " a bitter old man living in an 8 @- @ year @- @ old 's body " .

= = Home release = =

" Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " was first released on video on May 5 , 1998 as part of the three @- @ volume VHS set , which included humorous introductions to each show by Parker and Stone . 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 completely separate from the DVDs . Like most episodes of South Park , " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " is available to watch for free on the show 's website , SouthParkStudios.com.

The original , unaired version of the pilot had seen only limited release . It was released on a DVD in 2003 , which was made available by pre @- @ ordering South Park : The Complete Second

Season through Best Buy in the United States . The back cover of this release features a description of the unaired pilot by South Park animation director Eric Stough . In 2009 , the unaired pilot was made available for free online viewing for a limited time of 30 days at the show 's official website . During this time , the site also featured a version of the pilot with audio commentary by Eric Stough and South Park Studios creative director Chris Brion . The unaired pilot had also been shown publicly at certain venues , such as The US Comedy Arts Festival (now called The Comedy Festival) in Aspen , Colorado in 1998 and at Comic @-@ Con in San Diego in 2011 as part of the " Year of the Fan " 15th anniversary promotion of South Park .