

= Dead Celebrities =

" Dead Celebrities " is the eighth episode of the thirteenth season of the American animated television series South Park . The 189th overall episode of the series , it originally aired on Comedy Central in the United States on October 7 , 2009 . In the episode , Ike is haunted by the ghosts of dead celebrities until Michael Jackson , who refuses to accept death , possesses him .

The episode was written and directed by series co -@-@ creator Trey Parker , and was rated TV @-@ MA L in the United States (specifically for adults , with coarse language) . " Dead Celebrities " included references to several actors , singers and famous people who died in the summer of 2009 , when South Park was on a mid @-@ season hiatus . Among the celebrities featured in the episode were Billy Mays , Ed McMahon , Farrah Fawcett , Patrick Swayze , Walter Cronkite , Dom DeLuise , Ted Kennedy , Natasha Richardson , Bea Arthur , David Carradine , DJ AM , Ricardo Montalban , and Steve McNair . " Dead Celebrities " also parodied the films The Sixth Sense and Poltergeist .

The reality series Ghost Hunters and its stars , Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson , were mocked in the episode . Hawes and Wilson said they loved the parody and encouraged fans to watch the show on their Twitter accounts . A subplot claimed food at the Chipotle Mexican Grill resulted in customers defecating blood , a claim which was disputed by the restaurant chain within days of the episode 's broadcast . " Dead Celebrities " received generally mixed reviews . According to Nielsen ratings , " Dead Celebrities " was seen by 2 @.@ 67 million overall households .

= = Plot = =

Ike is terrified by frequent encounters with the ghosts of recently deceased celebrities . He is haunted by people such as Farrah Fawcett , David Carradine , Ed McMahon , DJ AM , and especially Billy Mays , who repeatedly tries selling Ike products from the afterlife . Kyle is terrified when he finds out about the ghost his brother is encountering and tells Stan , Cartman and Kenny about the encounters . Cartman , who does not initially care , decides to help when Kyle mentions that one of the ghosts haunting Ike is Billy Mays . Cartman then shows commercials that feature Mays on television , implying that he is an enthusiastic supporter of a product which Mays promoted , called " ChipotlAway " , which cleans bloodstains from people 's underwear caused by eating food from Chipotle Mexican Grill . The boys call the team from the reality television series Ghost Hunters in to help , but they quickly , fearfully start ascribing supernatural meaning to random , ambient , environmental noises , before urinating and defecating on themselves , and finally running from the house . Eventually , Ike goes into a coma because of his multiple experiences with the ghosts .

The boys seek help from a medium (a parody of Zelda Rubinstein 's character in Poltergeist) , who explains the celebrities are trapped in purgatory , which she compares to being stuck on a plane waiting endlessly on a runway for permission to take off . The medium manages to contact the spirits and tell them that they have passed on . Much to her surprise , the celebrities say that they all accept the fact . Two deceased celebrities , CBS News anchorman Walter Cronkite and Patrick Swayze , tell her that Michael Jackson 's refusal to acknowledge his death is the main cause of them being trapped . Some of the celebrities help the medium and the boys try to convince Jackson that he is dead , but Jackson keeps denying it and insists he is not only alive , but also a little white girl . His denial is so strong that he emits a very powerful force which kills the medium by flinging her through the window of Ike 's hospital room . The ghosts of these annoyed celebrities are shown in purgatory , which resembles the interior of an airplane , complete with seats , flight attendants and pilot voice @-@ over announcements .

After the energy disturbance , Jackson 's spirit takes over Ike 's body , causing Ike to speak , sing and dance like Jackson himself . The boys find from online research that the only way to make Jackson accept his death is to make him experience the acceptance he sought in life , so they take him to a child beauty pageant for young girls . Dressed like a little girl , Ike / Jackson impresses two of the male judges by singing a tune sounding similar to Jackson 's " You Are Not Alone , " but they are promptly arrested for masturbating while watching the children , leaving a single , unimpressed female judge (much to the shock of the boys , who were unaware of the men 's lewd acts and

considered them the best judges) . When Cartman notices the judge eating Chipotle , he bribes her with knowledge about the Chipotle Away product , and she declares Ike / Jackson the winner as a result . One of the other contestants is physically beaten by her mother for losing . Having found his acceptance , Jackson leaves Ike 's body , and Ike is extremely surprised and disgusted to find himself dressed like a little girl .

Later on , Jackson and the other celebrities in purgatory are reunited and they are finally able to lift off . Initially happy , they are soon taken to Hell . To their annoyance , however , the flight attendant tells them that they must again wait as Hell is a tow gate .

= = Production and theme = =

" Dead Celebrities " was written and directed by series co @-@ founder Trey Parker , and was rated TV @-@ MA L in the United States . It first aired on October 7 , 2009 in the United States on Comedy Central . The day after " Dead Celebrities " was originally broadcast , T @-@ shirts and hooded sweatshirts based on the episode was made available at South Park Studios , the official South Park website . It featured a frightened Ike standing above the phrase , " I see dead celebrities " .

" Dead Celebrities " includes references to several actors , singers and other celebrities who died in the summer of 2009 , when the thirteenth season of South Park was on a mid @-@ season hiatus . The episode serves not only to parody the celebrities themselves , but also to provide commentary on the tendency of American media to exploit , idolatrise and excessively report on the lives of celebrities . The most prominently featured of these celebrities is pop singer Michael Jackson , who died of multiple drug intoxication on June 25 .

Billy Mays , a television advertisement salesman , is the first dead celebrity featured in the episode , and plays a large role in the early part of the script . Mays ' son , Billy Mays III , a self @-@ proclaimed South Park fan , said he loved " Dead Celebrities " , and found its portrayal of his father tasteful and respectful . He said , " South Park gets a little edgy sometimes , but at their core , they 're just social satire , you know ? I think it was natural for them to do a dead celebrities episode with this whole summer and how it 's been , and I think the way they did it was pretty tasteful for the most part . " The spirit of David Carradine is shown wearing lingerie and with a noose around his neck , a reference to his June 3 , 2009 , death by autoerotic asphyxiation . Among the others featured in the episode were actress Farrah Fawcett , journalist Walter Cronkite , disc jockey Adam Goldstein (DJ AM) , politician Ted Kennedy , actress Beatrice Arthur , television personality Ed McMahon , actor Patrick Swayze , actress Natasha Richardson , hot dog magnate Oscar G. Mayer , Jr. and actor / chef Dom DeLuise .

= = Cultural references = =

" Dead Celebrities " makes frequent mention of the Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurant chain , describing the food as extremely tasty , but claiming it resulted in bloody stool . Shortly after the episode first aired , a Chipotle spokesperson said via a Twitter message that the claim was false . In the episode 's commentary , Trey Parker and Matt Stone admitted that they loved Chipotle , but found it funnier to use a restaurant with a healthy reputation rather than a place like McDonald 's or Taco Bell . Ike 's ability to see the spirits of dead celebrities serves as a parody of the 1999 thriller film The Sixth Sense , which stars Haley Joel Osment as a young boy who can see ghosts . Ike 's line , " I see dead celebrities " , is a reference to that film 's most famous line , " I see dead people . " The old lady psychic with a very high @-@ pitched voice is a reference to the character played by Zelda Rubinstein in the 1982 horror film , Poltergeist . Another film reference is made to The Exorcist when the medium is flung from the window . " Dead Celebrities " also mocks the Syfy reality television series Ghost Hunters by featuring the show 's stars attempting to contact the celebrity spirits , only to be frightened and run away . Finally , the episode also parodies children 's beauty pageants and the tendency of stage mothers to become unhealthily obsessed with their children winning such contests .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on October 7 , 2009 , " Dead Celebrities " was watched by 2 @. @ 67 million overall households , according to Nielsen ratings . It received a 1 @. @ 8 rating / 3 share , and a 1 @. @ 5 rating / 4 share among viewers aged between 18 and 49 .

The episode received generally mixed reviews . Ramsley Isler of IGN called " Dead Celebrities " one of the best episodes of the season , adding the jokes at the expense of the deceased were not too tasteless . He praised the parodies of The Sixth Sense , Poltergeist and Ghost Hunters , but said some jokes , like the masturbating judges at the children 's beauty contest , were offensive and unfunny . Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson , stars of Ghost Hunters , declared that " far from being offended or incensed [...] they loved being made fun of alongside Michael Jackson and Billy Mays . Carlos Delgado of iF Magazine said " Dead Celebrities " was an especially funny episode that also featured a " crapload of story " that was well @-@ timed for the Halloween season . Josh Modell of The A.V. Club called it " a decent episode " , but felt the dead celebrities were too obvious targets for South Park satire , adding , " It 's easy to make the same jokes that the rest of the world already has . " Modell said the Sixth Sense and Poltergeist references " fell a little flat " , but he praised the Chipotle subplot , which he called " beautifully random [and] totally ridiculous " . Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly said the episode was in bad taste , but added , " I laughed until I choked " . Tucker described the Michael Jackson impersonation as " first @-@ rate " and felt the solution to freeing Jackson 's spirit served as " a ruthless parody of child beauty pageants " .

Ingela Ratledge of TV Guide favorably described the episode as the exact opposite of award show segments that reverentially pay homage to the year 's departed celebrities , calling it " a wonderfully tasteless farewell . " Sue Bergerstein , an arts and celebrity writer with Examiner.com , called " Dead Celebrities " a " new low " for South Park , adding " It 's not only tasteless but this episode just adds to the sadness currently experienced by all the mourning relatives . " Newsweek writer Joshua Alston said few of the jokes in " Dead Celebrities " were funny , and so the mocking of celebrities " in the absence of laughs , felt tasteless and unnecessary " . Alan Sepinwall , television journalist with The Star @-@ Ledger , said many of the episodes seemed rehashed and predictable , especially those targeting Michael Jackson and children 's beauty pageants . Sepinwall added he liked the Chipotle subplot , but commented , " Overall , ' Dead Celebrities ' was a misfire . " Mitch Norton of the SLC Cartoon Analysis found the episode to be extremely funny . " Genius is not only found in the reference to the deaths of celebrities , but creates a new way to view death as a way to live on . We can view death as the end , or a new beginning to something else . "

= = Home release = =

" Dead Celebrities " , along with the thirteen other episodes from South Park 's thirteenth season , were released on a three @-@ disc DVD set and two @-@ disc Blu @-@ ray set in the United States on March 16 , 2010 . The sets included brief audio commentaries by Parker and Stone for each episode , a collection of deleted scenes , and a special mini @-@ feature Inside Xbox : A Behind @-@ the @-@ Scenes Tour of South Park Studios , which discussed the process behind animating the show with Inside Xbox host Major Nelson .

A deleted scene from this episode is included on the complete thirteenth season DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc sets . It shows the boys taking Michael Jackson (in Ike 's body) to the Glendale location of Forest Lawn Memorial @-@ Parks & Mortuaries to prove he is dead . When they reach the grave , Jackson denies it and Kyle attempts to show him by taking a shovel and digging his grave . Stan at first opposes but he , with Cartman and Kenny take shovels and the scene ends with the boys digging Jackson 's grave to show he is dead while Ike / Jackson dances . Jackson 's grave shows his date of death as July 25 , 2009 , when in fact he died on June 25 .