

= The Simpsons =

The Simpsons is an American animated sitcom created by Matt Groening for the Fox Broadcasting Company . The series is a satirical depiction of a working class lifestyle epitomized by the Simpson family , which consists of Homer , Marge , Bart , Lisa , and Maggie . The show is set in the fictional town of Springfield and parodies American culture , society , television , and many aspects of the human condition . It 's the 20th Century Fox debut in animation .

The family was conceived by Groening shortly before a solicitation for a series of animated shorts with the producer James L. Brooks . Groening created a dysfunctional family and named the characters after members of his own family , substituting Bart for his own name . The shorts became a part of The Tracey Ullman Show on April 19 , 1987 . After a three @-@ season run , the sketch was developed into a half @-@ hour prime time show and was an early hit for Fox , becoming the network 's first series to land in the Top 30 ratings in a season (1989 ? 90) .

Since its debut on December 17 , 1989 , the series has broadcast 596 episodes . It will begin airing its 28th season in September 2016 . The Simpsons is the longest @-@ running American sitcom , the longest @-@ running American animated program , and in 2009 it surpassed Gunsmoke as the longest @-@ running American scripted primetime television series . The Simpsons Movie , a feature @-@ length film , was released in theaters worldwide on July 27 , 2007 , and grossed over \$ 527 million . On May 4 , 2015 , the series was officially renewed for seasons twenty @-@ seven (2015 ? 16) and twenty @-@ eight (2016 ? 17) , consisting of 22 episodes each .

The Simpsons has received widespread critical acclaim , especially for the " Golden Age " of approximately its first ten seasons . Time magazine named it the 20th century 's best television series , and The A.V. Club named it " television 's crowning achievement regardless of format " . On January 14 , 2000 , the Simpson family was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame . It has won dozens of awards since it debuted as a series , including 31 Primetime Emmy Awards , 30 Annie Awards , and a Peabody Award . Homer 's exclamatory catchphrase " D 'oh ! " has been adopted into the English language , while The Simpsons has influenced many adult @-@ oriented animated sitcoms . Despite this , the show has also been criticized for what many perceive as a decline in quality over the years .

= = Premise = =

= = = Characters = = =

The Simpsons are a family who live in a fictional " Middle American " town of Springfield . Homer , the father , works as a safety inspector at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant , a position at odds with his careless , buffoonish personality . He is married to Marge Simpson , a stereotypical American housewife and mother . They have three children : Bart , a ten @-@ year @-@ old troublemaker ; Lisa , a precocious eight @-@ year @-@ old activist ; and Maggie , the baby of the family who rarely speaks , but communicates by sucking on a pacifier . Although the family is dysfunctional , many episodes examine their relationships and bonds with each other and they are often shown to care about one another . The family owns a dog , Santa 's Little Helper , and a cat , Snowball V , renamed Snowball II in " I , (Annoyed Grunt) -Bot " . Both pets have had starring roles in several episodes .

The show includes an array of quirky supporting characters : co @-@ workers , teachers , family friends , extended relatives , townspeople and local celebrities . The creators originally intended many of these characters as one @-@ time jokes or for fulfilling needed functions in the town . A number of them have gained expanded roles and subsequently starred in their own episodes . According to Matt Groening , the show adopted the concept of a large supporting cast from the comedy show SCTV .

Despite the depiction of yearly milestones such as holidays or birthdays passing , the characters do not age between episodes (either physically or in stated age) , and generally appear just as they

did when the series began . The series uses a floating timeline in which episodes generally take place in the year the episode is produced even though the characters do not age . Flashbacks / forwards do occasionally depict the characters at other points in their lives , with the timeline of these depictions also generally floating relative to the year the episode is produced . In a nod to the non @-@ aging aspect of the show , when asked during the Family Guy crossover episode " The Simpsons Guy " how long Nelson Muntz has been bullying him , Bart replies " 24 years . "

= = = Setting = = =

The Simpsons takes place in the fictional American town of Springfield in an unknown and impossible @-@ to @-@ determine U.S. state . The show is intentionally evasive in regard to Springfield 's location . Springfield 's geography , and that of its surroundings , contains coastlines , deserts , vast farmland , tall mountains , or whatever the story or joke requires . Groening has said that Springfield has much in common with Portland , Oregon , the city where he grew up . The name " Springfield " is a common one in America and appears in 22 states . Groening has said that he named it after Springfield , Oregon , and the fictitious Springfield which was the setting of the series Father Knows Best . He " figured out that Springfield was one of the most common names for a city in the U.S. In anticipation of the success of the show , I thought , ' This will be cool ; everyone will think it 's their Springfield . ' And they do . " An astronomer and fan of the show , Phil Plait , noticed that The Simpsons could be set in Australia , because the moon in Springfield faces the wrong way to be an American location . It is drawn facing the right , as it would in the Southern Hemisphere .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

When producer James L. Brooks was working on the television variety show The Tracey Ullman Show , he decided to include small animated sketches before and after the commercial breaks . Having seen one of cartoonist Matt Groening 's Life in Hell comic strips , Brooks asked Groening to pitch an idea for a series of animated shorts . Groening initially intended to present an animated version of his Life in Hell series . However , Groening later realized that animating Life in Hell would require the rescinding of publication rights for his life 's work . He therefore chose another approach while waiting in the lobby of Brooks 's office for the pitch meeting , hurriedly formulating his version of a dysfunctional family that became the Simpsons . He named the characters after his own family members , substituting " Bart " for his own name , adopting an anagram of the word " brat " .

The Simpson family first appeared as shorts in The Tracey Ullman Show on April 19 , 1987 . Groening submitted only basic sketches to the animators and assumed that the figures would be cleaned up in production . However , the animators merely re @-@ traced his drawings , which led to the crude appearance of the characters in the initial shorts . The animation was produced domestically at Klasky Csupo , with Wes Archer , David Silverman , and Bill Kopp being animators for the first season . Colorist Gyorgyi Peluce was the person who decided to make the characters yellow .

In 1989 , a team of production companies adapted The Simpsons into a half @-@ hour series for the Fox Broadcasting Company . The team included the Klasky Csupo animation house . 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 " . " 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 . In 1992 , Tracey Ullman filed a lawsuit against Fox , claiming that her show was the source of the series ' success . The suit said she should receive a share of the profits of The Simpsons ? a claim rejected

by the courts .

== Executive producers and showrunners ==

Matt Groening and James L. Brooks have served as executive producers during the show 's entire history , and also function as creative consultants . Sam Simon , described by former Simpsons director Brad Bird as " the unsung hero " of the show , served as creative supervisor for the first four seasons . He was constantly at odds with Groening , Brooks and the show 's production company Gracie Films and left in 1993 . Before leaving , he negotiated a deal that sees him receive a share of the profits every year , and an executive producer credit despite not having worked on the show since 1993 , at least until his passing in 2015 . A more involved position on the show is the showrunner , who acts as head writer and manages the show 's production for an entire season .

== Writing ==

The first team of writers , assembled by Sam Simon , consisted of John Swartzwelder , Jon Vitti , George Meyer , Jeff Martin , Al Jean , Mike Reiss , Jay Kogen and Wallace Wolodarsky . Newer Simpsons ' writing teams typically consist of sixteen writers who propose episode ideas at the beginning of each December . The main writer of each episode writes the first draft . Group rewriting sessions develop final scripts by adding or removing jokes , inserting scenes , and calling for re @-@ readings of lines by the show 's vocal performers . Until 2004 , George Meyer , who had developed the show since the first season , was active in these sessions . According to long @-@ time writer Jon Vitti , Meyer usually invented the best lines in a given episode , even though other writers may receive script credits . Each episode takes six months to produce so the show rarely comments on current events .

Credited with sixty episodes , John Swartzwelder is the most prolific writer on The Simpsons . One of the best @-@ known former writers is Conan O 'Brien , who contributed to several episodes in the early 1990s before replacing David Letterman as host of the talk show Late Night . English comedian Ricky Gervais wrote the episode " Homer Simpson , This Is Your Wife " , becoming the first celebrity to both write and guest star in an episode . Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg , writers of the film Superbad , wrote the episode " Homer the Whopper " , with Rogen voicing a character in it .

At the end of 2007 , the writers of The Simpsons went on strike together with the other members of the Writers Guild of America , East . The show 's writers had joined the guild in 1998 .

== Voice actors ==

The Simpsons has six main cast members : Dan Castellaneta , Julie Kavner , Nancy Cartwright , Yeardley Smith , Hank Azaria and Harry Shearer . Castellaneta voices Homer Simpson , Grampa Simpson , Krusty the Clown , Groundskeeper Willie , Mayor Quimby , Barney Gumble and other adult , male characters . Julie Kavner voices Marge Simpson and Patty and Selma , as well as several minor characters . Castellaneta and Kavner had been a part of The Tracey Ullman Show cast and were given the parts so that new actors would not be needed . Cartwright voices Bart Simpson , Nelson Muntz , Ralph Wiggum and other children . Smith , the voice of Lisa Simpson , is the only cast member who regularly voices only one character , although she occasionally plays other episodic characters . The producers decided to hold casting for the roles of Bart and Lisa . Smith had initially been asked to audition for the role of Bart , but casting director Bonita Pietila believed her voice was too high , so she was given the role of Lisa instead . Cartwright was originally brought in to voice Lisa , but upon arriving at the audition , she found that Lisa was simply described as the " middle child " and at the time did not have much personality . Cartwright became more interested in the role of Bart , who was described as " devious , underachieving , school @-@ hating , irreverent , [and] clever " . Groening let her try out for the part instead , and upon hearing her read , gave her the job on the spot . Cartwright is the only one of the six main Simpsons cast members who had been professionally trained in voice acting prior to working on the show . Azaria

and Shearer do not voice members of the title family , but play a majority of the male townspeople . Azaria , who has been a part of the Simpsons regular voice cast since the second season , voices recurring characters such as Moe Szyslak , Chief Wiggum , Apu Nahasapeemapetilon and Professor Frink . Shearer also provides voices for Mr. Burns , Mr. Smithers , Principal Skinner , Ned Flanders , Reverend Lovejoy and Dr. Hibbert . Every main cast member has won a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Voice @-@ Over Performance .

With one exception , episode credits list only the voice actors , and not the characters they voice . Both Fox and the production crew wanted to keep their identities secret during the early seasons and , therefore , closed most of the recording sessions while refusing to publish photos of the recording artists . However , the network eventually revealed which roles each actor performed in the episode " Old Money " , because the producers said the voice actors should receive credit for their work . In 2003 , the cast appeared in an episode of Inside the Actors Studio , doing live performances of their characters ' voices .

The six main actors were paid \$ 30 @,@ 000 per episode until 1998 , when they were involved in a pay dispute with Fox . The company threatened to replace them with new actors , even going as far as preparing for casting of new voices , but series creator Groening supported the actors in their action . The issue was soon resolved and , from 1998 to 2004 , they were paid \$ 125 @,@ 000 per episode . The show 's revenue continued to rise through syndication and DVD sales , and in April 2004 the main cast stopped appearing for script readings , demanding they be paid \$ 360 @,@ 000 per episode . The strike was resolved a month later and their salaries were increased to something between \$ 250 @,@ 000 and \$ 360 @,@ 000 per episode . In 2008 , production for the twentieth season was put on hold due to new contract negotiations with the voice actors , who wanted a " healthy bump " in salary to an amount close to \$ 500 @,@ 000 per episode . The negotiations were soon completed , and the actors ' salary was raised to \$ 400 @,@ 000 per episode . Three years later , with Fox threatening to cancel the series unless production costs were cut , the cast members accepted a 30 percent pay cut , down to just over \$ 300 @,@ 000 per episode .

In addition to the main cast , Pamela Hayden , Tress MacNeille , Marcia Wallace , Maggie Roswell , and Russi Taylor voice supporting characters . From 1999 to 2002 , Roswell 's characters were voiced by Marcia Mitzman Gaven . Karl Wiedergott has also appeared in minor roles , but does not voice any recurring characters . Wiedergott left the show in 2010 , and since then Chris Edgerly has appeared regularly to voice minor characters . Repeat " special guest " cast members include Albert Brooks , Phil Hartman , Jon Lovitz , Joe Mantegna , Maurice LaMarche , and Kelsey Grammer . Following Hartman 's death in 1998 , the characters he voiced (Troy McClure and Lionel Hutz) were retired ; Wallace 's character of Edna Krabappel was retired as well after her death in 2013 .

Episodes will quite often feature guest voices from a wide range of professions , including actors , athletes , authors , bands , musicians and scientists . In the earlier seasons , most of the guest stars voiced characters , but eventually more started appearing as themselves . Tony Bennett was the first guest star to appear as himself , appearing briefly in the season two episode " Dancin ' Homer " . The Simpsons holds the world record for " Most Guest Stars Featured in a Television Series " .

The Simpsons has been dubbed into several other languages , including Japanese , German , Spanish , and Portuguese . It is also one of the few programs dubbed in both standard French and Quebec French . The show has been broadcast in Arabic , but due to Islamic customs , numerous aspects of the show have been changed . For example , Homer drinks soda instead of beer and eats Egyptian beef sausages instead of hot dogs . Because of such changes , the Arabized version of the series met with a negative reaction from the lifelong Simpsons fans in the area .

= = = Animation = = =

Several different U.S. and international studios animate The Simpsons . Throughout the run of the animated shorts on The Tracey Ullman Show , the animation was produced domestically at Klasky Csupo . With the debut of the series , because of an increased workload , Fox subcontracted production to several international studios , located in South Korea . These are AKOM , Anivision , Rough Draft Studios , USAnimation , and Toonzone Entertainment . A subcontractor connection to

the North Korean SEK Studio has been suspected but not confirmed . The production staff at the U.S. animation studio , Film Roman , draws storyboards , designs new characters , backgrounds , props and draws character and background layouts , which in turn become animatics to be screened for the writers at Gracie Films for any changes to be made before the work is shipped overseas . The overseas studios then draw the inbetweens , ink and paint , and render the animation to tape before it is shipped back to the United States to be delivered to Fox three to four months later .

For the first three seasons , Klasky Csupo animated The Simpsons in the United States . In 1992 , the show 's production company , Gracie Films , switched domestic production to Film Roman , who continue to animate the show as of 2012 . In Season 14 , production switched from traditional cel animation to digital ink and paint . The first episode to experiment with digital coloring was " Radioactive Man " in 1995 . Animators used digital ink and paint during production of the season 12 episode " Tennis the Menace " , but Gracie Films delayed the regular use of digital ink and paint until two seasons later . The already completed " Tennis the Menace " was broadcast as made .

The series began high @-@ definition production in Season 20 ; the first episode , " Take My Life , Please " , aired February 15 , 2009 . The move to HDTV included a new opening sequence . Matt Groening called it a complicated change because it affected the timing and composition of animation .

= = Themes = =

The Simpsons uses the standard setup of a situational comedy , or sitcom , as its premise . The series centers on a family and their life in a typical American town , serving as a satirical parody of a middle class American lifestyle . However , because of its animated nature , The Simpsons ' scope is larger than that of a regular sitcom . The town of Springfield acts as a complete universe in which characters can explore the issues faced by modern society . By having Homer work in a nuclear power plant , the show can comment on the state of the environment . Through Bart and Lisa 's days at Springfield Elementary School , the show 's writers illustrate pressing or controversial issues in the field of education . The town features a vast array of media channels ? from kids ' television programming to local news , which enables the producers to make jokes about themselves and the entertainment industry .

Some commentators say the show is political in nature and susceptible to a left @-@ wing bias . Al Jean admitted in an interview that " We [the show] are of liberal bent . " The writers often evince an appreciation for liberal ideals , but the show makes jokes across the political spectrum . The show portrays government and large corporations as callous entities that take advantage of the common worker . Thus , the writers often portray authority figures in an unflattering or negative light . In The Simpsons , politicians are corrupt , ministers such as Reverend Lovejoy are indifferent to churchgoers , and the local police force is incompetent . Religion also figures as a recurring theme . In times of crisis , the family often turns to God , and the show has dealt with most of the major religions .

= = Hallmarks = =

= = = Opening sequence = = =

The Simpsons ' opening sequence is one of the show 's most memorable hallmarks . The standard opening has gone through three iterations (a replacement of some shots at the start of the second season , and a brand new sequence when the show switched to high @-@ definition in 2009) . Each has the same basic sequence of events : The camera zooms through cumulus clouds , through the show 's title towards the town of Springfield . The camera then follows the members of the family on their way home . Upon entering their house , the Simpsons settle down on their couch to watch television . The original opening was created by David Silverman , and was the first task he did when production began on the show . The series ' distinctive theme song was composed by

musician Danny Elfman in 1989 , after Groening approached him requesting a retro style piece . This piece has been noted by Elfman as the most popular of his career .

One of the most distinctive aspects of the opening is that three of its elements change from episode to episode : Bart writes different things on the school chalkboard , Lisa plays different solos on her saxophone and different gags accompany the family as they enter their living room to sit on the couch .

= = = Halloween episodes = = =

The special Halloween episode has become an annual tradition . " Treehouse of Horror " first broadcast in 1990 as part of season two and established the pattern of three separate , self @-@ contained stories in each Halloween episode . These pieces usually involve the family in some horror , science fiction , or supernatural setting and often parody or pay homage to a famous piece of work in those genres . They always take place outside the normal continuity of the show . Although the Treehouse series is meant to be seen on Halloween , this changed by the 2000s , when new installments have premiered after Halloween due to Fox 's current contract with Major League Baseball 's World Series , however , as of 2011 every Treehouse of Horror episode has aired during the month of October .

= = = Humor = = =

The show 's humor turns on cultural references that cover a wide spectrum of society so that viewers from all generations can enjoy the show . Such references , for example , come from movies , television , music , literature , science , and history . The animators also regularly add jokes or sight gags into the show 's background via humorous or incongruous bits of text in signs , newspapers , billboards , and elsewhere . The audience may often not notice the visual jokes in a single viewing . Some are so fleeting that they become apparent only by pausing a video recording of the show . Kristin Thompson argues that The Simpsons uses a " flurry of cultural references , intentionally inconsistent characterization , and considerable self @-@ reflexivity about television conventions and the status of the programme as a television show . "

One of Bart 's early hallmarks was his prank calls to Moe 's Tavern owner Moe Szyslak in which Bart calls Moe and asks for a gag name . Moe tries to find that person in the bar , but soon realizes it is a prank call and angrily threatens Bart. These calls were apparently based on a series of prank calls known as the Tube Bar recordings , though Groening has denied any causal connection . Moe was based partly on Tube Bar owner Louis " Red " Deutsch , whose often profane responses inspired Moe 's violent side . As the series progressed , it became more difficult for the writers to come up with a fake name and to write Moe 's angry response , and the pranks were dropped as a regular joke during the fourth season . The Simpsons also often includes self @-@ referential humor . The most common form is jokes about Fox Broadcasting . For example , the episode " She Used to Be My Girl " included a scene in which a Fox News Channel van drove down the street while displaying a large " Bush Cheney 2004 " banner and playing Queen 's " We Are the Champions " , in reference to the 2004 U.S. presidential election and claims of conservative bias in Fox News .

The show uses catchphrases , and most of the primary and secondary characters have at least one each . Notable expressions include Homer 's annoyed grunt " D 'oh ! " , Mr. Burns ' " Excellent " and Nelson Muntz 's " Ha @-@ ha ! " . Some of Bart 's catchphrases , such as " j Ay , caramba ! " , " Don 't have a cow , man ! " and " Eat my shorts ! " appeared on T @-@ shirts in the show 's early days . However , Bart rarely used the latter two phrases until after they became popular through the merchandising . The use of many of these catchphrases has declined in recent seasons . The episode " Bart Gets Famous " mocks catchphrase @-@ based humor , as Bart achieves fame on the Krusty the Clown Show solely for saying " I didn 't do it . "

= = Influence and legacy = =

= = = Idioms = = =

A number of neologisms that originated on The Simpsons have entered popular vernacular . Mark Liberman , director of the Linguistic Data Consortium , remarked , " The Simpsons has apparently taken over from Shakespeare and the Bible as our culture 's greatest source of idioms , catchphrases and sundry other textual allusions . " The most famous catchphrase is Homer 's annoyed grunt : " D 'oh ! " So ubiquitous is the expression that it is now listed in the Oxford English Dictionary , but without the apostrophe . Dan Castellaneta says he borrowed the phrase from James Finlayson , an actor in many Laurel and Hardy comedies , who pronounced it in a more elongated and whining tone . The staff of The Simpsons told Castellaneta to shorten the noise , and it went on to become the well @-@ known exclamation in the television series .

Groundskeeper Willie 's description of the French as " cheese @-@ eating surrender monkeys " was used by National Review columnist Jonah Goldberg in 2003 , after France 's opposition to the proposed invasion of Iraq . The phrase quickly spread to other journalists . " Cromulent " and " Embiggen " , words used in " Lisa the Iconoclast " , have since appeared in the Dictionary.com 's 21st Century Lexicon , and scientific journals respectively . " Kwyjibo " , a fake Scrabble word invented by Bart in " Bart the Genius " , was used as one of the aliases of the creator of the Melissa worm . " I , for one , welcome our new insect overlords " , was used by Kent Brockman in " Deep Space Homer " and has become a common phrase . Variants of Brockman 's utterance are used to express obsequious submission . It has been used in media , such as New Scientist magazine . The dismissive term " Meh " , believed to have been popularized by the show , entered the Collins English Dictionary in 2008 . Other words credited as stemming from the show include " yoink " and " craptacular " .

The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations includes several quotations from the show . As well as " cheese @-@ eating surrender monkeys " , Homer 's lines , " Kids , you tried your best and you failed miserably . The lesson is never try " , from " Burns ' Heir " (season five , 1994) as well as " Kids are the best , Apu . You can teach them to hate the things you hate . And they practically raise themselves , what with the Internet and all " , from " Eight Misbehavin ' " (season 11 , 1999) , entered the dictionary in August 2007 .

= = = Television = = =

The Simpsons was the first successful animated program in American prime time since Wait Till Your Father Gets Home in the 1970s . During most of the 1980s , US pundits considered animated shows as appropriate only for children , and animating a show was too expensive to achieve a quality suitable for prime @-@ time television . The Simpsons changed this perception . The use of Korean animation studios for tweening , coloring , and filming made the episodes cheaper . The success of The Simpsons and the lower production cost prompted US television networks to take chances on other animated series . This development led US producers to a 1990s boom in new , animated prime @-@ time shows , such as South Park , Family Guy , King of the Hill , Futurama and The Critic . For Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane , " The Simpsons created an audience for prime @-@ time animation that had not been there for many , many years ... As far as I 'm concerned , they basically re @-@ invented the wheel . They created what is in many ways ? you could classify it as ? a wholly new medium . "

The Simpsons has had crossovers with four other shows . In the episode " A Star Is Burns " , Marge invites Jay Sherman , the main character of The Critic , to be a judge for a film festival in Springfield . Matt Groening had his name removed from the episode since he had no involvement with The Critic . South Park later paid homage to The Simpsons with the episode " Simpsons Already Did It " . In " Simpsorama " , the Planet Express crew from Futurama come to Springfield in the present to prevent the Simpsons from destroying the future . In the Family Guy episode " The Simpsons Guy " , the Griffins visit Springfield and meet the Simpsons .

The Simpsons has also influenced live @-@ action shows like Malcolm in the Middle , which

featured the use of sight gags and did not use a laugh track unlike most sitcoms . Malcolm in the Middle debuted January 9 , 2000 , in the time slot after The Simpsons . Ricky Gervais called The Simpsons an influence on The Office , and fellow British sitcom Spaced was , according to its director Edgar Wright , " an attempt to do a live @-@ action The Simpsons . " In Georgia , the animated television sitcom The Samsonadzes , launched in November 2009 , has been noted for its very strong resemblance with The Simpsons , which its creator Shalva Ramishvili has acknowledged .

= = Reception and achievements = =

= = = Early success = = =

The Simpsons was the Fox network 's first television series to rank among a season 's top 30 highest @-@ rated shows . While later seasons would focus on Homer , Bart was the lead character in most of the first three seasons . In 1990 , Bart quickly became one of the most popular characters on television in what was termed " Bartmania " . He became the most prevalent Simpsons character on memorabilia , such as T @-@ shirts . In the early 1990s , millions of T @-@ shirts featuring Bart were sold ; as many as one million were sold on some days . Believing Bart to be a bad role model , several American public schools banned T @-@ shirts featuring Bart next to captions such as " I 'm Bart Simpson . Who the hell are you ? " and " Underachiever (' And proud of it , man ! ') " . The Simpsons merchandise sold well and generated \$ 2 billion in revenue during the first 14 months of sales . Because of his popularity , Bart was often the most promoted member of the Simpson family in advertisements for the show , even for episodes in which he was not involved in the main plot .

Due to the show 's success , over the summer of 1990 the Fox Network decided to switch The Simpsons ' time slot so that it would move from 8 : 00 p.m. ET on Sunday night to the same time on Thursday , where it would compete with The Cosby Show on NBC , the number one show at the time . Through the summer , several news outlets published stories about the supposed " Bill vs. Bart " rivalry . " Bart Gets an F " (season two , 1990) was the first episode to air against The Cosby Show , and it received a lower Nielsen ratings , tying for eighth behind The Cosby Show , which had an 18 @.@ 5 rating . The rating is based on the number of household televisions that were tuned into the show , but Nielsen Media Research estimated that 33 @.@ 6 million viewers watched the episode , making it the number one show in terms of actual viewers that week . At the time , it was the most watched episode in the history of the Fox Network , and it is still the highest rated episode in the history of The Simpsons . The show moved back to its Sunday slot in 1994 and has remained there ever since .

The Simpsons has been praised by many critics , being described as " the most irreverent and unapologetic show on the air . " In a 1990 review of the show , Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly described it as " the American family at its most complicated , drawn as simple cartoons . It 's this neat paradox that makes millions of people turn away from the three big networks on Sunday nights to concentrate on The Simpsons . " Tucker would also describe the show as a " pop @-@ cultural phenomenon , a prime @-@ time cartoon show that appeals to the entire family . "

= = = Run length achievements = = =

On February 9 , 1997 , The Simpsons surpassed The Flintstones with the episode " The Itchy & Scratchy & Poochie Show " as the longest @-@ running prime @-@ time animated series in the United States . In 2004 , The Simpsons replaced The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (1952 to 1966) as the longest @-@ running sitcom (animated or live action) in the United States . In 2009 , The Simpsons surpassed The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet 's record of 435 episodes and is now recognized by Guinness World Records as the world 's longest running sitcom (in terms of episode count) . In October 2004 , Scooby @-@ Doo briefly overtook The Simpsons as the American animated show with the highest number of episodes . However , network executives in April 2005

again cancelled Scooby @-@ Doo , which finished with 371 episodes , and The Simpsons reclaimed the title with 378 episodes at the end of their seventeenth season . In May 2007 , The Simpsons reached their 400th episode at the end of the eighteenth season . While The Simpsons has the record for the number of episodes by an American animated show , other animated series have surpassed The Simpsons . For example , the Japanese anime series Sazae @-@ san has over 7 @,@ 000 episodes to its credit .

In 2009 , Fox began a year @-@ long celebration of the show titled " Best . 20 Years . Ever . " to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the premiere of The Simpsons . One of the first parts of the celebration is the " Unleash Your Yellow " contest in which entrants must design a poster for the show . The celebration ended on January 10 , 2010 (almost 20 years after " Bart the Genius " aired on January 14 , 1990) , with The Simpsons 20th Anniversary Special ? In 3 @-@ D ! On Ice ! , a documentary special by documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock that examines the " cultural phenomenon of The Simpsons " .

As of the twenty @-@ first season (2009 ? 2010) , The Simpsons became the longest @-@ running American scripted primetime television series , having surpassed Gunsmoke . However , Gunsmoke 's episode count of 635 episodes surpasses The Simpsons , which will not reach that mark until its approximate 29th season under normal programming schedules . However , since Gunsmoke was a full @-@ hour series for its latter fourteen seasons , The Simpsons is the longest @-@ running half @-@ hour series in primetime television . In May 2015 , Fox renewed the show up to the end of a 28th season .

= = = Awards and accolades = = =

The Simpsons has won dozens of awards since it debuted as a series , including 31 Primetime Emmy Awards , 30 Annie Awards and a Peabody Award . In a 1999 issue celebrating the 20th century 's greatest achievements in arts and entertainment , Time magazine named The Simpsons the century 's best television series . In that same issue , Time included Bart Simpson in the Time 100 , the publication 's list of the century 's 100 most influential people . Bart was the only fictional character on the list . On January 14 , 2000 , the Simpsons were awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame . Also in 2000 , Entertainment Weekly magazine TV critic Ken Tucker named The Simpsons the greatest television show of the 1990s . Furthermore , viewers of the UK television channel Channel 4 have voted The Simpsons at the top of two polls : 2001 's 100 Greatest Kids ' TV shows , and 2005 's The 100 Greatest Cartoons , with Homer Simpson voted into first place in 2001 's 100 Greatest TV Characters . Homer would also place ninth on Entertainment Weekly 's list of the " 50 Greatest TV icons " . In 2002 , The Simpsons ranked # 8 on TV Guide 's 50 Greatest TV Shows of All Time , and in 2007 it was included in Time 's list of the " 100 Best TV Shows of All Time " . In 2008 the show was placed in first on Entertainment Weekly 's " Top 100 Shows of the Past 25 Years " . Empire named it the greatest TV show of all time . In 2010 , Entertainment Weekly named Homer " the greatest character of the last 20 years " , while in 2013 the Writers Guild of America listed The Simpsons as the 11th " best written " series in television history . In 2013 , TV Guide ranked The Simpsons as the greatest TV cartoon of all time and the tenth greatest show of all time .

= = = Criticism and controversy = = =

Bart 's rebellious , bad boy nature , which frequently resulted in no punishment for his misbehavior , led some parents and conservatives to characterize him as a poor role model for children . In schools , educators claimed that Bart was a " threat to learning " because of his " underachiever and proud of it " attitude and negative attitude regarding his education . Others described him as " egotistical , aggressive and mean @-@ spirited " . In a 1991 interview , Bill Cosby described Bart as a bad role model for children , calling him " angry , confused , frustrated " . In response , Matt Groening said , " That sums up Bart , all right . Most people are in a struggle to be normal [and] he thinks normal is very boring , and does things that others just wished they dare do . " On January 27 , 1992 , then @-@ President George H. W. Bush said , " We are going to keep on trying to

strengthen the American family , to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons . " The writers rushed out a tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek reply in the form of a short segment which aired three days later before a rerun of " Stark Raving Dad " in which Bart replied , " Hey , we 're just like the Waltons . We 're praying for an end to the Depression , too . "

Various episodes of the show have generated controversy . The Simpsons visit Australia in " Bart vs. Australia " (season six , 1995) and Brazil in " Blame It on Lisa " (season 13 , 2002) and both episodes generated controversy and negative reaction in the visited countries . In the latter case , Rio de Janeiro 's tourist board ? who claimed that the city was portrayed as having rampant street crime , kidnappings , slums , and monkey and rat infestations ? went so far as to threaten Fox with legal action . Groening was a fierce and vocal critic of the episode " A Star Is Burns " (season six , 1995) which featured a crossover with The Critic . He felt that it was just an advertisement for The Critic , and that people would incorrectly associate the show with him . When he was unsuccessful in getting the episode pulled , he had his name removed from the credits and went public with his concerns , openly criticizing James L. Brooks and saying the episode " violates the Simpsons ' universe . " In response , Brooks said , " I am furious with Matt , ... he 's allowed his opinion , but airing this publicly in the press is going too far his behavior right now is rotten . " " The Principal and the Pauper " (season nine , 1997) is one of the most controversial episodes of The Simpsons . Many fans and critics reacted negatively to the revelation that Seymour Skinner , a recurring character since the first season , was an impostor . The episode has been criticized by Groening and by Harry Shearer , who provides the voice of Skinner . In a 2001 interview , Shearer recalled that after reading the script , he told the writers , " That 's so wrong . You 're taking something that an audience has built eight years or nine years of investment in and just tossed it in the trash can for no good reason , for a story we 've done before with other characters . It 's so arbitrary and gratuitous , and it 's disrespectful to the audience . "

The show has reportedly been taken off the air in several countries . China banned it from prime @-@ time television in August 2006 , " in an effort to protect China 's struggling animation studios . " In 2008 , Venezuela barred the show from airing on morning television as it was deemed " unsuitable for children " . The same year , several Russian Pentecostal churches demanded that The Simpsons , South Park and some other Western cartoons be removed from broadcast schedules " for propaganda of various vices " and the broadcaster 's license to be revoked . However , the court decision later dismissed this request .

= = = Criticism of declining quality = = =

Critics ' reviews of early Simpsons episodes praised the show for its sassy humor , wit , realism , and intelligence . However , in the late 1990s , around the airing of seasons nine and ten , the tone and emphasis of the show began to change . Some critics started calling the show " tired " . By 2000 , some long @-@ term fans had become disillusioned with the show , and pointed to its shift from character @-@ driven plots to what they perceived as an overemphasis on zany antics . Jim Schembri of The Sydney Morning Herald attributed the decline in quality to an abandonment of character @-@ driven storylines in favor of and overuse of celebrity cameo appearances and references to popular culture . Schembri wrote : " The central tragedy of The Simpsons is that it has gone from commanding attention to merely being attention seeking . It began by proving that cartoon characters don 't have to be caricatures ; they can be invested with real emotions . Now the show has in essence fermented into a limp parody of itself . Memorable story arcs have been sacrificed for the sake of celebrity walk @-@ ons and punchline @-@ hungry dialogue . "

The BBC noted " the common consensus is that The Simpsons ' golden era ended after season nine " , while Todd Leopold of CNN , in an article looking at its perceived decline , stated " for many fans ... the glory days are long past . " Similarly , Tyler Wilson of Coeur d 'Alene Press has referred to seasons one to nine as the show 's " golden age " , and Ian Nathan of Empire described the show 's classic era as being " say , the first ten seasons . " Jon Heacock of LucidWorks stated that " for the first ten years [seasons] , the show was consistently at the top of its game " , with " so many moments , quotations , and references ? both epic and obscure ? that helped turn the Simpson

family into the cultural icons that they remain to this day . "

Mike Scully , who was showrunner during seasons nine through twelve , has been the subject of criticism . Chris Suellentrop of Slate wrote that " under Scully 's tenure , The Simpsons became , well , a cartoon Episodes that once would have ended with Homer and Marge bicycling into the sunset now end with Homer blowing a tranquilizer dart into Marge 's neck . The show 's still funny , but it hasn 't been touching in years . " When asked in 2007 how the series ' longevity is sustained , Scully joked : " Lower your quality standards . Once you 've done that you can go on forever . "

Al Jean , showrunner since season thirteen , has also been the subject of criticism , with some arguing that the show has continued to decline in quality under his tenure . Former writers have complained that under Jean , the show is " on auto @-@ pilot " , " too sentimental " , and the episodes are " just being cranked out . " Some critics believe that the show has " entered a steady decline under Jean and is no longer really funny . " John Ortved , author of The Simpsons : An Uncensored , Unauthorized History , characterized the Jean era as " toothless " , and criticized what he perceived as the show 's increase in social and political commentary . Jean has responded to this criticism by saying : " Well , it 's possible that we 've declined . But honestly , I 've been here the whole time and I do remember in season two people saying , ' It 's gone downhill . ' If we 'd listened to that then we would have stopped after episode 13 . I 'm glad we didn 't . "

In 2003 , to celebrate the show 's 300th episode " Barting Over " , USA Today published a pair of Simpsons related articles : a top @-@ ten episodes list chosen by the webmaster of The Simpsons Archive fansite , and a top @-@ 15 list by The Simpsons ' own writers . The most recent episode listed on the fan list was 1997 's " Homer 's Phobia " ; the Simpsons ' writers most recent choice was 2000 's " Behind the Laughter " . The series ' ratings have also declined ; while the first season enjoyed an average of 13 @.@ 4 million viewing households per episode in the U.S. , the twenty @-@ first season had an average of 7 @.@ 2 million viewers .

In 2004 , Harry Shearer criticized what he perceived as the show 's declining quality : " I rate the last three seasons as among the worst , so Season Four looks very good to me now . " In response , Dan Castellaneta stated " I don 't agree , ... I think Harry 's issue is that the show isn 't as grounded as it was in the first three or four seasons , that it 's gotten crazy or a little more madcap . I think it organically changes to stay fresh . "

Author Douglas Coupland described claims of declining quality in the series as " hogwash " , saying " The Simpsons hasn 't fumbled the ball in fourteen years , it 's hardly likely to fumble it now . " In an April 2006 interview , Matt Groening said , " I honestly don 't see any end in sight . I think it 's possible that the show will become too financially cumbersome ... but right now , the show is creatively , I think , as good or better than it 's ever been . The animation is incredibly detailed and imaginative , and the stories do things that we haven 't done before . So creatively there 's no reason to quit . "

In 2016 , popular culture writer Anna Leszkiewicz suggested that despite the fact that the Simpsons still holds cultural relevance , contemporary appeal is only for the first ten seasons , with recent Simpsons episodes only garnering mainstream attention when a favourite character from the golden era is killed off , or when new information and shock twists are given for old characters .

= = Other media = =

= = = Comic books = = =

Numerous Simpson @-@ related comic books have been released over the years . So far , nine comic book series have been published by Bongo Comics since 1993 . The first comic strips based on The Simpsons appeared in 1991 in the magazine Simpsons Illustrated , which was a companion magazine to the show . The comic strips were popular and a one @-@ shot comic book titled Simpsons Comics and Stories , containing four different stories , was released in 1993 for the fans . The book was a success and due to this , the creator of The Simpsons , Matt Groening , and his companions Bill Morrison , Mike Rote , Steve Vance and Cindy Vance created the publishing

company Bongo Comics . Issues of Simpsons Comics , Bart Simpson 's Treehouse of Horror and Bart Simpson have been collected and reprinted in trade paperbacks in the United States by HarperCollins .

== Film ==

20th Century Fox , Gracie Films , and Film Roman produced The Simpsons Movie , an animated film that was released on July 27 , 2007 . The film was directed by long @-@ time Simpsons producer David Silverman and written by a team of Simpsons writers comprising Matt Groening , James L. Brooks , Al Jean , George Meyer , Mike Reiss , John Swartzwelder , Jon Vitti , David Mirkin , Mike Scully , Matt Selmán , and Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham . Production of the film occurred alongside continued writing of the series despite long @-@ time claims by those involved in the show that a film would enter production only after the series had concluded . There had been talk of a possible feature @-@ length Simpsons film ever since the early seasons of the series . James L. Brooks originally thought that the story of the episode " Kamp Krusty " was suitable for a film , but he encountered difficulties in trying to expand the script to feature @-@ length . For a long time , difficulties such as lack of a suitable story and an already fully engaged crew of writers delayed the project .

== Music ==

Collections of original music featured in the series have been released on the albums Songs in the Key of Springfield , Go Simpsonic with The Simpsons and The Simpsons : Testify . Several songs have been recorded with the purpose of a single or album release and have not been featured on the show . The album The Simpsons Sing the Blues was released in September 1990 and was a success , peaking at # 3 on the Billboard 200 and becoming certified 2 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America . The first single from the album was the pop rap song " Do the Bartman " , performed by Nancy Cartwright and released on November 20 , 1990 . The song was written by Michael Jackson , although he did not receive any credit . The Yellow Album was released in 1998 , but received poor reception and did not chart in any country .

== The Simpsons Ride ==

In 2007 , it was officially announced that The Simpsons Ride , a simulator ride , would be implemented into the Universal Studios Orlando and Universal Studios Hollywood . It officially opened May 15 , 2008 in Florida and May 19 , 2008 , in Hollywood . In the ride , patrons are introduced to a cartoon theme park called Krustyland built by Krusty the Clown . However , Sideshow Bob is loose from prison to get revenge on Krusty and the Simpson family . It features more than 24 regular characters from The Simpsons and features the voices of the regular cast members , as well as Pamela Hayden , Russi Taylor and Kelsey Grammer . Harry Shearer did not participate in the ride , so none of his characters have vocal parts .

== Video games ==

Numerous video games based on the show have been produced . Some of the early games include Konami 's arcade game The Simpsons (1991) and Acclaim Entertainment 's The Simpsons : Bart vs. the Space Mutants (1991) . More modern games include The Simpsons : Road Rage (2001) , The Simpsons : Hit & Run (2003) and The Simpsons Game (2007) . Electronic Arts , which produced The Simpsons Game , has owned the exclusive rights to create video games based on the show since 2005 . In 2010 , they released a game called The Simpsons Arcade for iOS . Another EA @-@ produced mobile game , Tapped Out , was released in 2012 for iOS users , then in 2013 for Android and Kindle users . Two Simpsons pinball machines have been produced : one that was available briefly after the first season , and another in 2007 , both out of production .

= = Syndication and streaming availability = =

In 2013 the cable television network FXX acquired exclusive cable and digital syndication rights for The Simpsons for a reported \$ 750 million , a deal which broke the record for being the biggest off @-@ network deal in television history . Original contracts had previously stated that syndication rights for The Simpsons would not be sold to cable until the series conclusion , at a time when cable syndication deals were highly rare . The series has been syndicated to local broadcast stations in nearly all markets throughout the United States since September 1993 .

FXX premiered The Simpsons on their network on August 21 , 2014 by starting a twelve @-@ day marathon which featured the first 552 episodes (every single episode that had already been released at the time) aired chronologically , including The Simpsons Movie , which FX Networks had already owned the rights to air . It was the longest continuous marathon in the history of television (until VH1 Classic aired a 433 @-@ hour , nineteen @-@ day , marathon of Saturday Night Live in 2015 ; celebrating that program 's 40th anniversary) . The first day of the marathon was the highest rated broadcast day in the history of the network so far , the ratings more than tripled that those of regular prime time programming for FXX . Ratings during the first six nights of the marathon grew night after night , with the network ranking within the top 5 networks in basic cable each night .

On October 21 , 2014 , a digital service courtesy of the FXNOW app , called Simpsons World , launched . Simpsons World has every episode of the series accessible to authenticated FX subscribers , and is available on game consoles such as Xbox One , streaming devices such as Roku and Apple TV , and online via web browser . There was early criticism of both wrong aspect ratios for earlier episodes and the length of commercial breaks on the streaming service , but there are now fewer commercial breaks during individual episodes . Later it was announced that Simpsons World would now let users watch all of the SD episodes in their original format .

= = Merchandise = =

The popularity of The Simpsons has made it a billion @-@ dollar merchandising industry . The title family and supporting characters appear on everything from T @-@ shirts to posters . The Simpsons has been used as a theme for special editions of well @-@ known board games , including Clue , Scrabble , Monopoly , Operation , and The Game of Life , as well as the trivia games What Would Homer Do ? and Simpsons Jeopardy ! . Several card games such as trump cards and The Simpsons Trading Card Game have also been released . Many official or unofficial Simpsons books such as episode guides have been published . Many episodes of the show have been released on DVD and VHS over the years . When the first season DVD was released in 2001 , it quickly became the best @-@ selling television DVD in history , although it was later overtaken by the first season of Chappelle 's Show . In particular , seasons one through seventeen have been released on DVD in the U.S. (Region 1) , Europe (Region 2) and Australia / New Zealand / Latin America (Region 4) . However , on April 19 , 2015 , Al Jean announced that the Season 17 DVD would be the last one ever produced , leaving the collection from Season 1 to 17 , Season 20 (released out of schedule in 2009) , with Seasons 18 , 19 , and 21 onwards unreleased . Jean also stated that the deleted scenes and commentary would try to be released to the Simpsons World app , and that they were pushing for Simpsons World to be expanded outside of the U.S.

In 2003 , about 500 companies around the world were licensed to use Simpsons characters in their advertising . As a promotion for The Simpsons Movie , twelve 7 @-@ Eleven stores were transformed into Kwik @-@ E @-@ Marts and sold The Simpsons related products . These included " Buzz Cola " , " Krusty @-@ O " cereal , pink doughnuts with sprinkles , and " Squishees " .

In 2008 consumers around the world spent \$ 750 million on merchandise related to The Simpsons , with half of the amount originating from the United States . By 2009 , 20th Century Fox had greatly increased merchandising efforts . On April 9 , 2009 , the United States Postal Service unveiled a series of five 44 @-@ cent stamps featuring Homer , Marge , Bart , Lisa and Maggie , to

commemorate the show 's twentieth anniversary . The Simpsons is the first television series still in production to receive this recognition . The stamps , designed by Matt Groening , were made available for purchase on May 7 , 2009 . Approximately one billion were printed , but only 318 million were sold , costing the Postal Service \$ 1 @. @ 2 million .

= = Simpsonwave = =

= = Frinkiac = =