

= South Park =

South Park is an American adult animated sitcom created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone for the Comedy Central television network . The show revolves around four boys ? Stan Marsh , Kyle Broflovski , Eric Cartman , and Kenny McCormick ? and their bizarre adventures in and around the titular Colorado town . Much like The Simpsons , South Park uses a very large ensemble cast of recurring characters . Intended for mature audiences , the show has become infamous for its crude language and dark , surreal humor that satirizes a wide range of topics .

Parker and Stone developed the show from two animated shorts they created in 1992 and 1995 . The latter became one of the first Internet viral videos , which ultimately led to its production as a series . South Park debuted in August 1997 with great success , consistently earning the highest ratings of any basic cable program . Subsequent ratings have varied but it remains one of Comedy Central 's highest rated shows , and is slated to air through at least 2019 .

The pilot episode was produced using cutout animation . All subsequent episodes are created with software that emulates the cutout technique . Parker and Stone perform most of the voice acting . Since 2000 , each episode is typically written and produced during the week preceding its broadcast , with Parker serving as the primary writer and director . There have been a total of 267 episodes over the course of the show 's 19 seasons . Season 20 will premiere on September 14 , 2016 .

South Park has received numerous accolades , including five Primetime Emmy Awards , a Peabody Award , and numerous inclusions in various publications ' lists of greatest television shows . The show 's popularity resulted in a feature @-@ length theatrical film , South Park : Bigger , Longer and Uncut which was released in June 1999 , less than two years after the show 's premiere , and became a commercial and critical success . In 2013 , TV Guide ranked South Park the tenth Greatest TV Cartoon of All Time .

= = Premise = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

The show follows the exploits of four boys , Stan Marsh , Kyle Broflovski , Eric Cartman and Kenny McCormick . The boys live in the fictional small town of South Park , located within the real life South Park basin in the Rocky Mountains of central Colorado . The town is also home to an assortment of frequent characters such as students , families , elementary school staff , and other various residents , who tend to regard South Park as a bland and quiet place to live . Prominent settings on the show include the local elementary school , bus stop , various neighborhoods and the surrounding snowy landscape , actual Colorado landmarks , and the shops and businesses along the town 's main street , all of which are based on the appearance of similar locations in the town of Fairplay , Colorado .

Stan is portrayed as the everyman of the group , as the show 's official website describes him as an " average , American 4th grader " . Kyle is the lone Jew among the group , and his portrayal in this role is often dealt with satirically . Stan is modeled after Parker , while Kyle is modeled after Stone . Stan and Kyle are best friends , and their friendship , which is intended to reflect the real life friendship between Parker and Stone , is a common topic throughout the series . Eric Cartman (usually referred to by his surname only) is a loud , obnoxious , manipulative , racist and obese literal psychopath . He is often portrayed as an antagonist whose anti @-@ Semitic attitude has resulted in an ever @-@ progressing rivalry with Kyle , although the deeper reason for the antagonistic relationship is the strong clash between Kyle 's strong morality , and Cartman 's complete lack of such . Kenny , who comes from a poor family , wears his parka hood so tightly that it covers most of his face and muffles his speech . During the show 's first five seasons , Kenny would die in nearly every episode before returning in the next with little or no definitive explanation given . He was written out of the show 's sixth season in 2002 , re @-@ appearing in the season finale . Since then , the practice of killing Kenny has been seldom used by the show 's creators .

During the show 's first 58 episodes , the boys were in the third grade . In the season four episode " 4th Grade " (2000) , they entered the fourth grade , where they have remained ever since .

Plots are often set in motion by events , ranging from the fairly typical to the supernatural and extraordinary , which frequently happen in the town . The boys often act as the voice of reason when these events cause panic or incongruous behavior among the adult populace , who are customarily depicted as irrational , gullible , and prone to vociferation . The boys are also frequently confused by the contradictory and hypocritical behavior of their parents and other adults , and often perceive them as having distorted views on morality and society .

= = = Themes and style = = =

Each episode opens with a tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek disclaimer : " All characters and events in this show ? even those based on real people ? are entirely fictional . All celebrity voices are impersonated poorly . The following program contains coarse language and due to its content it should not be viewed by anyone . "

South Park was the first weekly program to be assigned the TV @-@ MA rating , and is generally intended for adult audiences . The boys and most other child characters use strong profanity , with only the most taboo words being bleeped by censors during a typical broadcast . The use of such language serves as a means for Parker and Stone to display how they claim young boys really talk when they are alone .

South Park commonly makes use of carnivalesque and absurdist techniques , numerous running gags , violence , sexual content , offhand pop @-@ cultural references , and satirical portrayal of celebrities .

Early episodes tended to be shock value @-@ oriented and featured more slapstick @-@ style humor . While social satire had been used on the show occasionally earlier on , it became more prevalent as the series progressed , with the show retaining some of its focus on the boys ' fondness of scatological humor in an attempt to remind adult viewers " what it was like to be eight years old . " Parker and Stone also began further developing other characters by giving them larger roles in certain storylines , and began writing plots as parables based on religion , politics , and numerous other topics . This provided the opportunity for the show to spoof both extreme sides of contentious issues , while lampooning both liberal and conservative points of view . Parker and Stone describe themselves as " equal opportunity offenders " , whose main agenda is to " be funny " and " make people laugh " , while stating that no particular topic or group of people be spared the expense of being subject to mockery and satire .

Parker and Stone insist that the show is still more about " kids being kids " and " what it 's like to be in [elementary school] in America " , stating that the introduction of a more satirical element to the series was the result of the two adding more of a " moral center " to the show so that it would rely less on simply being crude and shocking in an attempt to maintain an audience . While profane , and with a tendency to sometimes be cynical , Parker notes that there is still an " underlying sweetness " aspect to the child characters , and Time described the boys as " sometimes cruel but with a core of innocence . " Usually , the boys and / or other characters ponder over what has transpired during an episode and convey the important lesson taken from it with a short monologue . During earlier seasons , this speech would commonly begin with a variation of the phrase " You know , I 've learned something today ... " .

= = Origins and creation = =

Soon after meeting in film class at the University of Colorado in 1992 , Parker and Stone created an animated short entitled The Spirit of Christmas . The film was created by animating construction paper cutouts with stop motion , and features prototypes of the main characters of South Park , including a character resembling Cartman but named " Kenny " , an unnamed character resembling what is today Kenny , and two near @-@ identical unnamed characters who resemble Stan and Kyle . Brian Graden , Fox network executive and mutual friend , commissioned Parker and Stone to

create a second short film as a video Christmas card . Created in 1995 , the second The Spirit of Christmas short resembled the style of the later series more closely . To differentiate between the two homonymous shorts , the first short is often referred to as Jesus vs. Frosty , and the second short as Jesus vs. Santa . Graden sent copies of the video to several of his friends , and from there it was copied and distributed , including on the internet , where it became one of the first viral videos .

As Jesus vs. Santa became more popular , Parker and Stone began talks of developing the short into a television series . Fox refused to pick up the series , not wanting to air a show that included the character Mr. Hankey , a talking piece of feces . The two then entered negotiations with both MTV and Comedy Central . Parker preferred the show be produced by Comedy Central , fearing that MTV would turn it into a kids show . When Comedy Central executive Doug Herzog watched the short , he commissioned for it to be developed into a series .

Parker and Stone assembled a small staff and spent three months creating the pilot episode " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " . South Park was in danger of being canceled before it even aired when the show fared poorly with test audiences , particularly with women . However , the shorts were still gaining more popularity over the Internet , and Comedy Central agreed to order a run of six episodes . South Park debuted with " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " on August 13 , 1997 .

= = Production = =

Except for the pilot episode , which was produced using cutout animation , all episodes of South Park are created with the use of software . As opposed to the pilot , which took three months to complete , and other animated sitcoms , which are traditionally hand-drawn by companies in South Korea in a process that takes roughly eight to nine months , individual episodes of South Park take significantly less time to produce . Using computers as an animation method , the show 's production staff were able to generate an episode in about three weeks during the first seasons . Now , with a staff of about 70 people , episodes are typically completed in one week , with some in as little as three to four days . Nearly the entire production of an episode is accomplished within one set of offices , which were originally at a complex in Westwood , Los Angeles , California , and are now part of South Park Studios in Culver City , California . Parker and Stone have been the show 's executive producers throughout its entire history , while Anne Garefino has served as South Park 's co-executive producer since the latter part of the first season . 20th Century Fox Senior Production Executive Debbie Liebling also served as an executive producer during the show 's first five seasons , coordinating the show 's production efforts between South Park Studios and Comedy Central 's headquarters in New York City .

Scripts are not written before a season begins . Production of an episode begins on a Thursday , with the show 's writing consultants brainstorming with Parker and Stone . Former staff writers include Pam Brady , who has since written scripts for the films Hot Rod and Hamlet 2 , and Nancy Pimental , who served as co-host of Win Ben Stein 's Money and wrote the film The Sweetest Thing after her tenure with the show during its first three seasons . Television producer and writer Norman Lear , an idol of both Parker and Stone , served as a guest writing consultant for the season seven (2003) episodes " Cancelled " and " I 'm a Little Bit Country " . During the 12th and 13th seasons , Saturday Night Live actor and writer Bill Hader served as a creative consultant and co-producer .

After exchanging ideas , Parker will write a script , and from there the entire team of animators , editors , technicians , and sound engineers will each typically work 100 ? 120 hours in the ensuing week . Since the show 's fourth season (2000) , Parker has assumed most of the show 's directorial duties , while Stone relinquished his share of the directing to focus on handling the coordination and business aspects of the production . On Wednesday , a completed episode is sent to Comedy Central 's headquarters via satellite uplink , sometimes in just a few hours before its air time of 10 PM Eastern Time .

Parker and Stone state that subjecting themselves to a one-week deadline creates more spontaneity amongst themselves in the creative process , which they feel results in a funnier show .

The schedule also allows South Park to both stay more topical and respond more quickly to specific current events than other satiric animated shows . One of the earliest examples of this was in the season four (2000) episode " Quintuplets 2000 " , which references the United States Border Patrol 's raid of a house during the Elián González affair , an event which occurred only four days before the episode originally aired . The season nine (2005) episode " Best Friends Forever " references the Terri Schiavo case , and originally aired in the midst of the controversy and less than 12 hours before she died . A scene in the season seven (2003) finale " It 's Christmas in Canada " references the discovery of dictator Saddam Hussein in a " spider hole " and his subsequent capture , which happened a mere three days prior to the episode airing . The season 12 (2008) episode " About Last Night ... " revolves around Barack Obama 's victory in the 2008 presidential election , and aired less than 24 hours after Obama was declared the winner , using segments of dialogue from Obama 's real victory speech .

On October 16 , 2013 , the show failed to meet their production deadline for the first time ever , after a power outage on October 15 at the production studio prevented the episode , season 17 's " Goth Kids 3 : Dawn of the Posers " , from being finished in time . The episode was rescheduled to air a week later on October 23 , 2013 . In July 2015 , South Park was renewed through 2019 ; extending the show through season 23 with 304 episodes overall .

= = = Animation = = =

The show 's style of animation is inspired by the paper cut @-@ out cartoons made by Terry Gilliam for Monty Python 's Flying Circus , of which Parker and Stone have been lifelong fans . Construction paper and traditional stop motion cutout animation techniques were used in the original animated shorts and in the pilot episode . Subsequent episodes have been produced by computer animation , providing a similar look to the originals while requiring a fraction of the time to produce . Before computer artists begin animating an episode , a series of animatics drawn in Toon Boom are provided by the show 's storyboard artists .

The characters and objects are composed of simple geometrical shapes and primary colors . Most child characters are the same size and shape , and are distinguished by their clothing and headwear . Characters are mostly presented two @-@ dimensionally and from only one angle . Their movements are animated in an intentionally jerky fashion , as they are purposely not offered the same free range of motion associated with hand @-@ drawn characters . Occasionally , some non @-@ fictional characters are depicted with photographic cutouts of their actual head and face in lieu of a face reminiscent of the show 's traditional style . Canadians on the show are often portrayed in an even more minimalist fashion ; they have simple beady eyes , and the top halves of their heads simply flap up and down when the characters speak .

When the show began using computers , the cardboard cutouts were scanned and re @-@ drawn with CorelDRAW , then imported into PowerAnimator , which was used with SGI workstations to animate the characters . The workstations were linked to a 54 @-@ processor render farm that could render 10 to 15 shots an hour . Beginning with season five , the animators began using Maya instead of PowerAnimator . The studio now runs a 120 @-@ processor render farm that can produce 30 or more shots an hour .

PowerAnimator and Maya are high @-@ end programs mainly used for 3D computer graphics , while co @-@ producer and former animation director Eric Stough notes that PowerAnimator was initially chosen because its features helped animators retain the show 's " homemade " look . PowerAnimator was also used for making some of the show 's visual effects , which are now created using Motion , a newer graphics program created by Apple , Inc. for their Mac OS X operating system . The show 's visual quality has improved in recent seasons , though several other techniques are used to intentionally preserve the cheap cutout animation look .

A few episodes feature sections of live @-@ action footage , while others have incorporated other styles of animation . Portions of the season eight (2004) premiere " Good Times with Weapons " are done in anime style , while the season 10 episode " Make Love , Not Warcraft " is done partly in machinima . The season 12 episode " Major Boobage " , a homage to the 1981 animated film Heavy

Metal , implements scenes accomplished with rotoscoping .

= = = Voice cast = = =

Parker and Stone voice most of the male South Park characters . Mary Kay Bergman voiced the majority of the female characters until her suicide on November 11 , 1999 . Mona Marshall and Eliza Schneider succeeded Bergman , with Schneider leaving the show after its seventh season (2003) . She was replaced by April Stewart , who , along with Marshall , continues to voice most of the female characters . Bergman was originally listed in the credits under the alias Shannen Cassidy to protect her reputation as the voice of several Disney and other kid @-@ friendly characters . Stewart was originally credited under the name Gracie Lazar , while Schneider was sometimes credited under her rock opera performance pseudonym Blue Girl .

Other voice actors and members of South Park 's production staff have voiced minor characters for various episodes , while a few staff members voice recurring characters ; supervising producer Jennifer Howell voices student Bebe Stevens , co @-@ producer and storyboard artist Adrien Beard voices the school 's only black student , Token Black , writing consultant Vernon Chatman voices an anthropomorphic towel named Towelie , and production supervisor John Hansen voices Mr. Slave , the former gay lover of Mr. Garrison . Throughout the show 's run , the voices for toddler and kindergarten characters have been provided by various small children of the show 's production staff .

When voicing child characters , the voice actors speak within their normal vocal range while adding a childlike inflection . The recorded audio is then edited with Pro Tools , and the pitch is altered to make the voice sound more like that of a fourth grader .

Isaac Hayes voiced the character of Chef , a black , soul @-@ singing cafeteria worker who was one of the few adults the boys consistently trusted . Hayes agreed to voice the character after being among Parker and Stone 's ideal candidates which also included Lou Rawls and Barry White . Hayes , who lived and hosted a radio show in New York during his tenure with South Park , would record his dialogue on a digital audio tape while a respective episode 's director would give directions over the phone , then the tape would be shipped to the show 's production studio in California . After Hayes left the show in early 2006 , the character of Chef was killed off in the season 10 (2006) premiere " The Return of Chef " .

= = = Guest stars = = =

Celebrities who are depicted on the show are usually impersonated , though some celebrities do their own voices for the show . Celebrities who have voiced themselves include Michael Buffer , Brent Musburger , Jay Leno , Robert Smith , and the bands Radiohead and Korn . Comedy team Cheech & Chong voiced characters representing their likenesses for the season four (2000) episode " Cherokee Hair Tampons " , which was the duo 's first collaborative effort in 20 years . Malcolm McDowell appears in live @-@ action sequences as the narrator of the season four episode " Pip " .

Jennifer Aniston , Richard Belzer , Natasha Henstridge , Norman Lear , and Peter Serafinowicz have guest starred as other speaking characters . During South Park 's earliest seasons , several high @-@ profile celebrities inquired about guest @-@ starring on the show . As a joke , Parker and Stone responded by offering low @-@ profile , non @-@ speaking roles , most of which were accepted ; George Clooney provided the barks for Stan 's dog Sparky in the season one (1997) episode " Big Gay Al 's Big Gay Boat Ride " , Leno provided the meows for Cartman 's cat in the season one finale " Cartman 's Mom Is a Dirty Slut " , and Henry Winkler voiced the various growls and grunts of a kid @-@ eating monster in the season two (1998) episode " City on the Edge of Forever " . Jerry Seinfeld offered to lend his voice for the Thanksgiving episode " Starvin ' Marvin " , but declined to appear when he was only offered a role as " Turkey # 2 " .

= = = Music = = =

Parker says that the varying uses of music is of utmost importance to South Park . Several characters often play or sing songs in order to change or influence a group 's behavior , or to educate , motivate , or indoctrinate others . The show also frequently features scenes in which its characters have disapproving reactions to the performances of certain popular musicians .

Adam Berry , the show 's original score composer , used sound synthesis to simulate a small orchestra , and frequently alluded to existing famous pieces of music . Berry also used signature acoustic guitar and mandolin cues as leitmotifs for the show 's establishing shots . After Berry left in 2001 , Jamie Dunlap and Scott Nickoley of the Los Angeles @-@ based Mad City Production Studios provided the show 's original music for the next seven seasons . Since 2008 , Dunlap has been credited as the show 's sole score composer . Dunlap 's contributions to the show are one of the few that are not achieved at the show 's own production offices . Dunlap reads a script , creates a score using digital audio software , and then e @-@ mails the audio file to South Park Studios , where it is edited to fit with the completed episode .

In addition to singing in an effort to explain something to the children , Chef would also sing about things relevant to what had transpired in the plot . These songs were original compositions written by Parker , and performed by Hayes in the same sexually suggestive R & B style he had utilized during his own music career . The band DVDA , which consists of Parker and Stone , along with show staff members Bruce Howell and D.A. Young , would perform the music for these compositions , and , until the character 's death on the show , were listed as " Chef 's Band " in the closing credits .

Rick James , Elton John , Meat Loaf , Joe Strummer , Ozzy Osbourne , Primus , Rancid , and Ween all guest starred and briefly performed in the season two (1998) episode " Chef Aid " . Korn debuted their single " Falling Away from Me " as guest stars on the season three (1999) episode " Korn 's Groovy Pirate Ghost Mystery " .

= = = = Title sequence = = = =

The show 's original theme song was a musical score performed by the band Primus , while the lyrics are alternately sung by the band 's lead singer , Les Claypool , and the show 's four central characters . Kenny 's muffled lines are altered after every few seasons . The original composition was originally slower but was sped up for the show , while an instrumental version of the original composition is often played during the show 's closing credits . The song 's melody is similar to the song " Coddington " , on Primus 's Brown Album . The opening theme song has been remixed three times during the course of the series , including a remix performed by Paul Robb . In 2006 , the theme music was remixed with the song " Whamola " by Colonel Les Claypool 's Fearless Flying Frog Brigade , from the album Purple Onion .

= = Distribution = =

= = = Episodes = = =

= = = International = = =

Internationally , South Park is broadcast in India , New Zealand , and several countries throughout Europe and Latin America on channels that are divisions of Comedy Central and MTV Networks , both subsidiaries of Viacom . In distribution deals with Comedy Central , other independent networks also broadcast the series in other international markets . In Australia , the show is broadcast on The Comedy Channel , SBS One (Season 1 ? 13 edited and 14 ? 15 Uncut) & SBS2 (Season 16 Uncut) . The series is broadcast uncensored in Canada in English on The Comedy Network and , later , Much . South Park also airs on TG4 in Ireland , STV in Scotland , Comedy Central and MTV

in the UK (previously on Channel 4) and B92 in Serbia .

== Syndication ==

Broadcast syndication rights to South Park were acquired by Debmars Mercury and Tribune Entertainment in 2003 and 2004 respectively . Episodes further edited for content began running in syndication on September 19 , 2005 , and are aired in the United States with the TV 14 rating . 20th Television replaced Tribune as co distributor in early 2008 . The series is currently aired in syndication in 90 percent of the television markets across the U.S. and Canada , where it generates an estimated US \$ 25 million a year in advertising revenue .

== Home media ==

The first eighteen seasons of South Park are available in their entirety on DVD . Several other themed DVD compilations have been released by Rhino Entertainment and Comedy Central , while the three episode Imaginationland story arc was reissued straight to DVD as a full length feature in 2008 .

== Streaming ==

In March 2008 , Comedy Central made every episode of South Park available for free full length on demand legal streaming on the official South Park Studios website . From March 2008 until December 2013 new episodes were added to the site the day following their debut , and an uncensored version was posted the following day . The episode stayed up for the remainder of the week , then taken down , and added to the site three weeks later .

Within a week , the site served more than a million streams of full episodes , and the number grew to 55 million by October 2008 . Legal issues prevent the U.S. content from being accessible outside the U.S. , so local servers have been set up in other countries . In September 2009 , a South Park Studios website with streaming episodes was launched in the UK . In Canada , episodes were available for streaming from The Comedy Network 's website , though due to digital rights restrictions , they are no longer available .

In July 2014 it was announced that Hulu had signed a three year deal purchasing exclusive online streaming rights to the South Park for a reported 80 million dollars . Following the announcement every episode remained available for free on the South Park Studios website , using the Hulu player . As of September 2014 , following the premiere of the eighteenth season , only 30 select episodes are featured for free viewing at a time on a rationing basis on the website , with new episodes being available for an entire month starting the day following their original airings . The entire series will be available for viewing on Hulu Plus .

In April 2010 , the season five episode " Super Best Friends " and the season fourteen episodes " 200 " and " 201 " (which all depict the Muslim prophet Muhammad) were removed from the site ; additionally , these episodes no longer air in reruns and are only available exclusively on DVD . These episodes remain unavailable following the 2014 purchase by Hulu .

== Re-rendered episodes ==

From its debut in 1997 until the season twelve finale in 2008 the series had been natively produced in 4 : 3 480i standard definition . In 2009 the series switched to being natively produced in 16 : 9 1080i high definition with the beginning of the thirteenth season .

All seasons originally produced in standard definition have been remastered by being completely re-rendered scene by scene and frame by frame by South Park Studios from their original resolution to full 1080i high definition . Additionally , the original 4 : 3 aspect ratio has been converted to 16 : 9 as well . The re-rendering process took South Park Studios several years , and resulted in the picture quality being in true HD as opposed to being up

converted . The re @-@ rendered episodes from the earlier seasons also feature their original uncensored audio tracks , which have never previously been released to the public uncensored .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

When South Park debuted , it was a huge ratings success for Comedy Central and is seen as being largely responsible for the success of the channel , with Herzog crediting it for putting the network " on the map " .

The show 's first episode , " Cartman Gets an Anal Probe " , earned a Nielsen rating of 1 @.@ 3 (980 @.@ 000 viewers) , at the time considered high for a cable program . The show instantly generated buzz among television viewers , and mass viewing parties began assembling on college campuses . By the time the eighth episode , " Starvin ' Marvin " , aired ? three months after the show debuted ? ratings and viewership had tripled , and South Park was already the most successful show in Comedy Central 's history . When the tenth episode " Damien " aired the following February , viewership increased another 33 percent . The episode earned a 6 @.@ 4 rating , which at the time was over 10 times the average rating earned by a cable show aired in prime time . The ratings peaked with the second episode of season two , " Cartman 's Mom Is Still a Dirty Slut " , which aired on April 22 , 1998 . The episode earned an 8 @.@ 2 rating (6 @.@ 2 million viewers) and , at the time , set a record as the highest @-@ rated non @-@ sports show in basic cable history . During the spring of 1998 , eight of the ten highest @-@ rated shows on basic cable were South Park episodes .

The success of South Park prompted more cable companies to carry Comedy Central and led it to its becoming one of the fastest @-@ growing cable channels . The number of households that had Comedy Central jumped from 9 @.@ 1 million in 1997 to 50 million in June 1998 . When the show debuted , the most Comedy Central had earned for a 30 @-@ second commercial was US \$ 7 @.@ 500 . Within a year , advertisers were paying an average of US \$ 40 @.@ 000 for 30 seconds of advertising time during airings of South Park in its second season , while some paid as much as US \$ 80 @.@ 000 .

By the third season (1999) , the series ' ratings began to decrease . The third season premiere episode drew 3 @.@ 4 million viewers , a dramatic drop from the 5 @.@ 5 million of the previous season 's premiere . Stone and Parker attributed this drop in the show 's ratings to the media hype that surrounded the show in the previous year , adding that the third season ratings reflected the show 's " true " fan base . The show 's ratings dropped further in its fourth season (2000) , with episodes averaging just above 1 @.@ 5 million viewers . The ratings eventually increased , and seasons five through nine consistently averaged about 3 million viewers per episode . Though its viewership is lower than it was at the height of its popularity in its earliest seasons , South Park remains one of the highest @-@ rated series on Comedy Central . The season 14 (2010) premiere gained 3 @.@ 7 million viewers , the show 's highest @-@ rated season premiere since 1998 .

= = = Recognitions and awards = = =

In 2004 , Channel 4 voted South Park the third @-@ greatest cartoon of all time . In 2007 , Time magazine included the show on its list of the " 100 Best TV Shows of All Time " , proclaiming it as " America 's best source of rapid @-@ fire satire for [the past] decade " . The same year , Rolling Stone declared it to be the funniest show on television since its debut 10 years prior . In 2008 , South Park was named the 12th @-@ greatest TV show of the past 25 years by Entertainment Weekly , while AOL declared it as having the " most astute " characters of any show in history when naming it the 16th @-@ best television comedy series of all time . In 2011 , South Park was voted number one in the 25 Greatest Animated TV Series poll by Entertainment Weekly . The character of Cartman ranked 10th on TV Guide 's 2002 list of the " Top 50 Greatest Cartoon Characters " , 198th

on VH1 's " 200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons " , 19th on Bravo 's " 100 Greatest TV Characters " television special in 2004 , and second on MSNBC 's 2005 list of TV 's scariest characters behind Mr. Burns from The Simpsons . In 2006 , Comedy Central received a Peabody Award for South Park 's " stringent social commentary " and " undeniably fearless lampooning of all that is self @-@ important and hypocritical in American life " . In 2013 , the Writers Guild of America ranked South Park at number 63 among the " 101 Best @-@ Written Shows Ever " . Also in 2013 , TV Guide listed the show at number 10 among the " 60 Greatest Cartoons of All Time " .

South Park won the CableACE Award for Best Animated Series in 1997 , the last year the awards were given out . In 1998 , South Park was nominated for the Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Animated Primetime or Late Night Television Program . It was also nominated for the 1998 GLAAD Award for Outstanding TV ? Individual Episode for " Big Gay Al 's Big Gay Boat Ride " .

South Park has been nominated for the Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program ten times (1998 , 2000 , 2002 , 2004 , 2005 , 2006 , 2007 , 2009 , 2010 and 2013) . The show has won the award for Outstanding Animated Program (For Programming Less Than One Hour) four times , for the 2005 episode " Best Friends Forever " , the 2006 episode " Make Love , Not Warcraft " , the 2009 episode " Margaritaville " , and the 2012 episode " Raising the Bar " . The " Imaginationland " trilogy of episodes won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (For Programming One Hour or More) in 2008 .

= = = Criticism and controversy = = =

The show 's frequent depiction of taboo subject matter , general toilet humor , accessibility to younger viewers , disregard for conservative sensibilities , negative depiction of liberal causes , and portrayal of religion for comic effect have been the main sources for generating controversy and debate over the course of its run . As the series first became popular , students in several schools were barred from wearing South Park @-@ related T @-@ shirts , while several parent councils in the United Kingdom expressed concern when eight- and nine @-@ year @-@ old children voted the South Park character Cartman as their favorite personality in a 1999 poll . Parker and Stone assert that the show is not meant to be viewed by young children , and the show is certified with TV ratings that indicate its intention for mature audiences .

Parents Television Council founder L. Brent Bozell III and Action for Children 's Television founder Peggy Charren have both condemned the show , with the latter claiming it is " dangerous to the democracy " . Several other activist groups have protested the show 's parodies of Christianity and portrayal of Jesus Christ . Stone claims that parents who disapprove of South Park for its portrayal of how kids behave are upset because they " have an idyllic vision of what kids are like " , adding " [kids] don 't have any kind of social tact or etiquette , they 're just complete little raging bastards " .

The show further lampooned the controversy surrounding its use of profanity , as well as the media attention surrounding the network show Chicago Hope 's singular use of the word shit , with the season five premiere " It Hits the Fan " , in which the word shit is said 162 times without being bleeped for censorship purposes , while also appearing uncensored in written form . In the days following the show 's original airing , 5 @,@ 000 disapproving e @-@ mails were sent to Comedy Central . Despite its 43 uncensored uses of the racial slur nigger , the season 11 episode " With Apologies to Jesse Jackson " generated relatively little controversy , as most in the black community and the NAACP praised the episode for its context and its comedic way of conveying other races ' perceptions of how black people must feel when hearing the word .

Specific controversies regarding the show have included an April Fools ' Day prank played on its viewers in 1998 , its depiction of the Virgin Mary in the season nine (2005) finale " Bloody Mary " which angered several Catholics , its depiction of Steve Irwin with a stingray barb stuck in his chest in the episode " Hell on Earth 2006 " , which originally aired less than two months after Irwin was killed in the same fashion , and Comedy Central 's censorship of the depiction of Muhammad in the season 10 episode " Cartoon Wars Part II " in the wake of the Jyllands @-@ Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy .

The season nine (2005) episode " Trapped in the Closet " denounces Scientology as nothing more than " a big fat global scam " , while freely divulging church information that Scientology normally only reveals to members who make significant monetary contributions to the church . The episode also ambiguously parodies the rumors involving the sexual orientation of Scientologist Tom Cruise , who allegedly demanded any further reruns of the episode be canceled . Isaac Hayes , a Scientologist , later quit South Park because of his objection to the episode .

The season fourteen episodes " 200 " and " 201 " were mired in controversy for satirizing issues surrounding the depiction of the Islamic prophet , Muhammad . The website for the organization Revolution Muslim , a New York @-@ based radical Muslim organization , posted an entry that included a warning to creators Parker and Stone that they risk violent retribution for their depictions of Muhammad . It said that they " will probably wind up like Theo van Gogh for airing this show " . The posting provided the addresses to Comedy Central in New York and the production company in Los Angeles . The author of the post , Zachary Adam Chessner (who prefers to be called Abu Talhah al @-@ Amrikee) , said it was meant to serve as a warning to Parker and Stone , not a threat , and that providing the addresses was meant to give people the opportunity to protest . Despite al @-@ Amrikee 's claims that the website entry was a warning , several media outlets and observers interpreted it as a threat . Support for the episode has come in the form of Everybody Draw Mohammed Day , a movement started on Facebook that encourages people to draw Muhammad on May 20 . The " 200 " episode , which also depicted the Buddha snorting cocaine , prompted the government of Sri Lanka to ban the series outright .

= = Influence = =

= = = Cultural = = =

Commentary made in episodes has been interpreted as statements Parker and Stone are attempting to make to the viewing public , and these opinions have been subject to much critical analysis in the media and literary world within the framework of popular philosophical , theological , social , and political concepts . Since South Park debuted , college students have written term papers and doctoral theses analyzing the show , while Brooklyn College offers a course called " South Park and Political Correctness " .

Soon after one of Kenny 's trademark deaths on the show , other characters would typically shout " Oh my God , they killed Kenny ! " . The exclamation quickly became a popular catchphrase , while the running gag of Kenny 's recurring deaths are one of the more recognized hallmarks among viewers of modern television . Cartman 's exclamations of " Respect my authori @-@ tah ! " and " Screw you guys ... I 'm going home ! " became catchphrases as well , and during the show 's earlier seasons , were highly popular in the lexicon of viewers . Cartman 's eccentric intonation of " Hey ! " was included in the 2002 edition of The Oxford Dictionary of Catchphrases .

In the season two episode " Chef Aid " , attorney Johnnie Cochran uses what 's called in the show the Chewbacca defense , which is a legal strategy that involves addressing plot holes related to Chewbacca in the film Return of the Jedi rather than discussing the trial at hand during a closing argument in a deliberate attempt to confuse jurors into thinking there is reasonable doubt . The term " Chewbacca defense " has been documented as being used by criminologists , forensic scientists , and political commentators in their various discussions of similar methods used in legal cases and public forums .

Another season two episode , " Gnomes " , revolves around a group of " underpants gnomes " who , as their name suggests , run a corporation stealing people 's underpants . When asked about their business model , various gnomes reply that theirs is a three @-@ step process : Phase 1 is " collect underpants " . Phase 3 is " profit " . However , the gnomes are unable to explain what is to occur between the first and final steps , and " Phase 2 " is accompanied by a large question mark on their corporate flow chart . Using " ? ? ? ? " and " PROFIT ! " as the last two steps in a process (usually jokingly) has become a widely popular Internet meme because of this . Especially in the context of

politics and economics , " underpants gnomes " has been used by some commentators to characterize a conspicuous gap of logic or planning .

When Sophie Rutschmann of the University of Strasbourg discovered a mutated gene that causes an adult fruit fly to die within two days after it is infected with certain bacteria , she named the gene *kep1* in honor of Kenny .

= = = Political = = =

While some conservatives have condemned the show for its vulgarity , a growing population of people who hold center @-@ right political beliefs , including teenagers and young adults , have embraced the show for its tendency to mock liberal viewpoints and lampoon liberal celebrities and icons . Political commentator Andrew Sullivan dubbed the group South Park Republicans , or South Park conservatives . Sullivan classified the group as " extremely skeptical of political correctness but also are socially liberal on many issues " , though he says the phrase applied to them is meant to be more of a casual indication of beliefs than a strong partisan label . Brian C. Anderson describes the group as " generally characterized by holding strong libertarian beliefs and rejecting more conservative social policy " , and notes that although the show makes " wicked fun of conservatives " , it is " at the forefront of a conservative revolt against liberal media . "

Parker and Stone downplay the show 's alignment with any particular political affiliation , and deny having a political agenda when creating an episode . The two claim the show 's higher ratio of instances lampooning liberal orthodoxies stems simply from their preference to make fun of liberals more than conservatives . While Stone has been quoted saying , " I hate conservatives , but I really fucking hate liberals " , Stone and Parker have explained that their drive to lampoon a given target comes first from the target 's insistence on telling other people how to behave . The duo explains that they perceive liberals as having both delusions of entitlement to remain free from satire , and a propensity to enforce political correctness while patronizing the citizens of Middle America . Parker and Stone are uncomfortable with the idea of themselves or South Park being applied with any kind of partisan classification . Parker said he rejects the " South Park Republican " and " South Park conservative " labels as a serious notion , feeling that either tag implies that one only adheres to strictly conservative or liberal viewpoints . Canadian columnist Jaime J. Weinman observes that the most die @-@ hard conservatives who identified themselves as " South Park Republicans " began turning away from the label when the show ridiculed Republicans in the season nine (2005) episode " Best Friends Forever . "

= = Film = =

In 1999 , less than two years after the series first aired , a feature @-@ length film was released . The film , a musical comedy , was directed by Parker , who co @-@ wrote the script with Stone and Pam Brady . The film was generally well received by critics , and earned a combined US \$ 83 @. @ 1 million at the domestic and foreign box office . The film satirizes the controversy surrounding the show itself and gained a spot in the 2001 edition of Guinness World Records for " Most Swearing in an Animated Film " . The song " Blame Canada " from the film 's soundtrack earned song co @-@ writers Parker and Marc Shaiman an Academy Award nomination for Best Music , Original Song .

Parker and Stone said in a 2008 interview that a theatrically released sequel would most likely be what concludes the series . In 2011 , when asked on the official South Park website whether a sequel would be made , they said " the first South Park movie was so potent , we 're all still recovering from the blow . Unfortunately , at the current moment , there are no plans for a second South Park movie . But you never know what the future may bring , crazier things have happened ... " In 2011 , Time called South Park : Bigger , Longer & Uncut the sixth greatest animated feature of all @-@ time . In 2013 , Warner Bros. Entertainment relinquished to Paramount Pictures its rights to co @-@ finance a potential future South Park film during their negotiations to co @-@ finance the Christopher Nolan science fiction film Interstellar . Previous efforts to create a second South Park film were complicated due to both studios retaining certain rights to the property .

= = Media and merchandise = =

= = = Shorts = = =

As a tribute to the Dead Parrot sketch , a short that features Cartman attempting to return a dead Kenny to a shop run by Kyle aired during a 1999 BBC television special commemorating the 30th anniversary of Monty Python 's Flying Circus . South Park parodied Scientology in a short that aired as part of the 2000 MTV Movie Awards . The short was entitled " The Gauntlet " and also poked fun at John Travolta , a Scientologist . The four main characters were featured in the documentary film The Aristocrats , listening to Cartman tell his version of the film 's titular joke . Short clips of Cartman introducing the starting lineup for the University of Colorado football team were featured during ABC 's coverage of the 2007 matchup between the University of Colorado and the University of Nebraska . In 2008 , Parker , as Cartman , gave answers to a Proust Questionnaire conducted by Julie Rovner of NPR . The Snakes & Arrows Tour for Rush in 2007 used an intro from Cartman , Stan , Kyle , and Kenny preceding " Tom Sawyer " . As Parker , Stone and producer Frank Agnone are Los Angeles Kings fans , special South Park pre @-@ game videos have been featured at Kings home games at Staples Center , and the club even sent the Stanley Cup to visit South Park Studios after winning the 2012 finals . Parker and Stone have also created Denver Broncos and Denver Nuggets @-@ themed shorts , featuring Cartman , for home games at Pepsi Center .

= = = Music = = =

Chef Aid : The South Park Album , a compilation of original songs from the show , characters performing cover songs , and tracks performed by guest artists was released in 1998 , while Mr. Hankey 's Christmas Classics , a compilation of songs performed by the characters in the episode of the same name as well as other Christmas @-@ themed songs was released in 1999 , as was the soundtrack to the feature film . The song " Chocolate Salty Balls " (performed by Hayes as Chef) was released as a single in the UK in 1998 to support the Chef Aid : The South Park Album and became a number one hit .

= = = Video games = = =

Following the early success of the series , three video games based on the series were released by Acclaim Entertainment . A first @-@ person shooter simply titled South Park was released in 1998 for the PC , Nintendo 64 , and PlayStation . This was followed in 1999 by South Park : Chef 's Luv Shack , a party video game featuring quizzes and mini @-@ games , on the Dreamcast , PlayStation , Nintendo 64 , and PC . In 2000 , South Park Rally , a racing game , was released on the Dreamcast , PlayStation , Nintendo 64 , and PC . Parker and Stone had little to do with the development of these games , apart from providing voice acting , and have publicly criticized Acclaim and the quality of the South Park games they produced .

There was a South Park game for the Game Boy Color in development at Acclaim but it was cancelled by Parker and Stone because they thought the game wasn 't right for the system as the main demograpic was kids . Parker and Stone have the prototype cartridge of the game , making it the first South Park video game ever made . Only one screenshot was published in Nintendo Power issue 114 in 1998 .

Another South Park game was in development for the PlayStation 2 , Xbox , and GameCube in 2004 but was cancelled for unknown reasons . A prototype of the game was found in an Xbox development kit in 2015 .

In 2010 , the decision was made to form a small group called South Park Digital Studios , which would , among other things , work on creating new South Park games , that would involve the studio and the show 's creators more heavily . The first such title is South Park Let 's Go Tower Defense

Play ! , a tower defense game developed by Doublesix , which was released in 2009 for the Xbox Live Arcade service on the Xbox 360 console . Another Xbox Live Arcade game , South Park : Tenorman 's Revenge , is a platformer which was released in the spring of 2012 . South Park : The Stick of Truth is a role @-@ playing video game that was written by Parker and Stone , and was originally scheduled to be released on March 5 , 2013 for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 consoles , and Microsoft Windows ; the game was eventually released on March 4 , 2014 to positive reviews . A sequel to The Stick of Truth has been announced and will be titled South Park : The Fractured But Whole .

= = = Merchandising = = =

Merchandising related to the show is an industry which generates several million dollars a year . In 1998 , the top @-@ selling specialty T @-@ shirt in the United States was based on South Park , and US \$ 30 million in T @-@ shirt sales was reached during the show 's first season .

A South Park pinball machine was released in 1999 by Sega Pinball . The companies Fun 4 All , Mezco Toyz , and Mirage have produced various South Park action figures , collectibles , and plush dolls .

Comedy Central entered into an agreement with Frito @-@ Lay to sell 1 @.@ 5 million bags of Cheesy Poofs , Cartman 's favorite snack from the show , at Walmart until the premiere of the second half of the fifteenth season on October 5 , 2011 .