

Origins of South Park



- Creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker.
- University of Colorado film school
- Student project collaboration “The Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs Frosty” (1992)
 - Prototypical “South Park” characters
 - Stop-motion animation
 - Leads to “Jesus vs Santa” short, that in turn leads to “South Park.”



The Spirit of Christmas



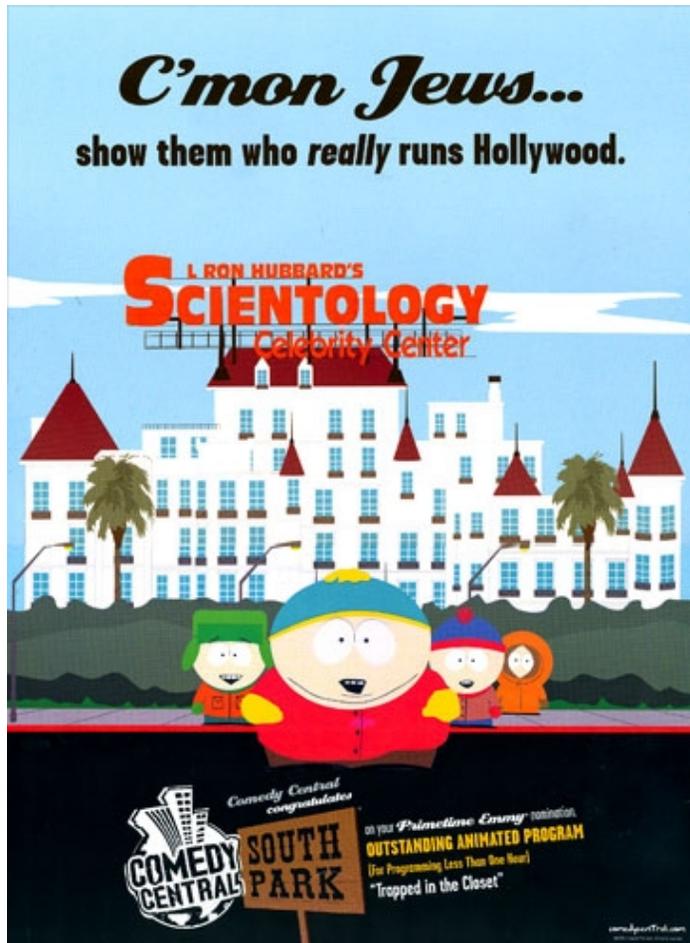
- The Spirit of Christmas (Jesus vs Santa Claus version) - animated Christmas card commissioned by FOX executive Brian Graden in 1995.
- Distributed widely via underground and fledgling internet.
- Success of this “card” lead to talks to create a series for FOX - later, series was signed with Comedy Central Network.
- Series premieres in 1997, currently in Season 17, contracted for seasons through to 2016.
- Full length film “South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut” premieres 1999.
- South Park has won 5 Emmy awards)+ nominated for 5 others)

Controversy



- Entire series controversial for vulgarity (one episode - “It Hits the Fan” used the word “shit” 162 times). Response to media frenzy over “Chicago’s Hope” use of the word once.
- Specific episodes (“Bloody Mary,” “Red Hot Catholic Love”) have been blacklisted by special interest groups, lobbying to have advertisers withdraw support (with minimal success)
- Christian Family Network convinces Walmart and Sam’s Club (Costco) not to carry South Park merchandise.
- Some episodes not broadcast in syndication due to pressure from special interest groups (Bloody Mary, Trapped in the Closet, Super Best Friends).

Controversy



Comedy Central

- “But the problem with South Park is exactly what Parker and other of the show’s defenders say is its strength. Whenever I denounce South Park’s vulgarity to students, they defend South Park by saying that they are insulting to everyone, as if that makes it better. This is essentially Parker’s defense against the charge of religious insensitivity. Hey, we make-fun of all religions. But this is the problem. I like irreverent humor as much as the next guy, maybe even more. But when you are irreverent toward everything you are reverent toward nothing. And some things deserve our reverence. A society full of Matt Parkers and Trey Stones (the other South Park creator) ultimately believes in nothing. We call that nihilism, and that’s bad. But it is sometimes really funny.”
- Is South Park “nihilistic”? Does it really believe in nothing?

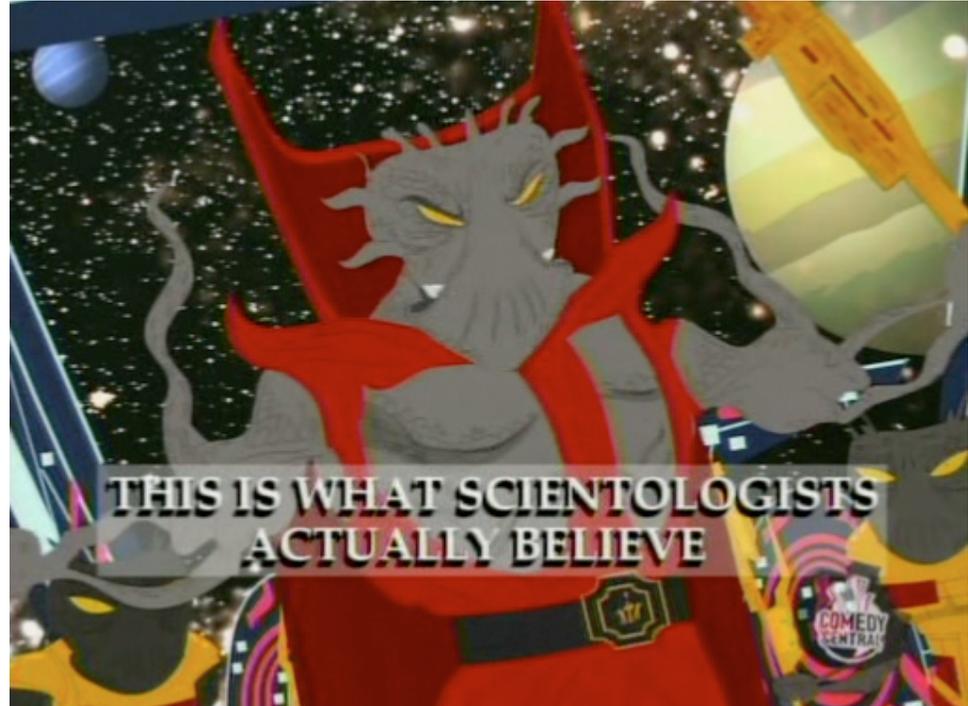
Controversy: Scientology

- “Trapped in the Closet controversy”
- Spoofing of Scientology
- Scientology founded by Sci-fi writer and self-help author L. Ron Hubbard.
- Many celebrity adherents, including Tom Cruise.
- Basic premise of scientology: to become successful, you must identify psychic blockages that prevent you from realizing your full potential. You can identify these blockages through Scientology counseling. Some of these blockages are caused by your own life experiences, others are caused by experiences in past lives, some are caused by “spirit possession” by “body Thetans.” Ultimately, you are an eternal spiritual being, and once you are clear of all blockages, you can regain your eternal oneness state as a pure spiritual being.



Scientology

- “Revelation” of secret Scientology doctrine (Xenu).
- Rumours suggest that either a threatened lawsuit by Tom Cruise, or a threat by Cruise to refuse to promote Mission Impossible III (owned by Viacom, who also owns Comedy Central) leads to cancellation of episode rebroadcast.
- Parker & Stone’s response to censorship of this episode: “So, Scientology, you may have won THIS battle, but the million-year war for Earth has just begun! Temporarily anozinizing our episode will NOT stop us from keeping Thetans forever trapped in your pitiful man-bodies. Curses and drat! You have obstructed us for now, but your feeble bid to save humanity will fail! Hail Xenu!!!”



Scientology

- Chef quits - Isaac Hayes, the voice of the character “Chef” and a practicing Scientologist, quit the show over the “Trapped in the Closet” episode. He stated: "There is a place in this world for satire, but there is a time when satire ends and intolerance and bigotry towards religious beliefs of others begins."
- Matt Stone, one of the co-creator of South Park, responded: "This is 100 percent having to do with his faith of Scientology... He has no problem — and he's cashed plenty of checks — with our show making fun of Christians... [he] wants a different standard for religions other than his own, and to me, that is where intolerance and bigotry begin."



“The Return of Chef!”



- Season 10 premiere, “The Return of Chef” represents Parker and Stone’s response to Hayes’ “defection.” The episode shows Chef return to South Park as a cult-brainwashed child molester, who ‘dies’ after being struck by lightning, catching on fire, falling off a bridge, bouncing off several rocks, being impaled on a jagged tree stump, shot three times, and then dismembered by a mountain lion and a grizzly bear.
- Unknown to the rest of South Park, however, Chef is not dead - he is turned into “Darth Chef” by the cult.