

## 420 (Family Guy)

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"**420**" is the twelfth episode of the seventh season of the animated comedy series *Family Guy*. It premiered on Fox in the United States on April 19, 2009. The title of the episode is a reference to the term "420" used in cannabis culture; "420" premiered the day before April 20 (4/20), on which a counterculture holiday is celebrated centering around the consumption of cannabis.<sup>[2]</sup> "420" focuses on the character Brian after he is arrested for drug possession, which prompts him to launch a campaign to legalize cannabis with help from Stewie; the liveliness of their campaign convinces Mayor West to legalize the drug, and most of Quahog's population begins using it.

The episode was written by Patrick Meighan and directed by Julius Wu. While it received positive reception from critics for its storyline and cultural references, it generated controversy from the Venezuelan government for its topic and received criticism from the Parents Television Council during a rerun. According to Nielsen ratings, it was viewed in 7.40 million homes in its original airing. The episode featured guest performances by Phil LaMarr and Kerrigan Mahan, along with several recurring guest voice actors for the series.

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### Plot

Peter, Brian, Cleveland and Joe are annoyed when Quagmire recently adopts a stray cat and prefers to spend more time with it than with them. When Quagmire is absent, they decide to shave the cat as a prank, but it backfires when Peter accidentally kills it. He and Brian decide to hide its body, but are pulled over by the police, who ignore Peter's blood stains and beer, but arrest Brian when they find him in possession of cannabis. He is bailed out by the family and put on probation for drug use. He attempts to use Stewie's urine when Joe arrives to perform a drug test, only to be caught by Lois, who chastises him for going to such lengths and tells him that he has to change if he intends on doing so. However, Brian decides to start a campaign to legalize cannabis in Quahog. He and Stewie perform an enthusiastic musical number, and soon after the entire town rallies behind them in their cause.


Mayor West passes a law to legalize the drug, and everyone starts smoking it; the town has improved as a result, with milestones such as a decrease in crime. However, Lois's father, Carter, begins to lose money in the timber industry since hemp is being used to manufacture many products, particularly paper, and he bribes Peter to help him with an anti-marijuana campaign. Lois, however, points out that their methods are uninspired, explaining that Brian only succeeded because he was passionate about legalizing cannabis. Carter decides to bribe Brian to join his cause by publishing and shipping his novel, *Faster Than the Speed of Love*. Brian resists at first, but Stewie suggests he at least perform a number about the risks of cannabis. Brian reluctantly complies, and the drug becomes illegal once more.

Brian's novel is released, but is critically panned and does not sell one copy. Brian laments that he sacrificed his core beliefs for nothing, but Lois intervenes because he helped ban cannabis. A distraught Quagmire arrives at the household and informs Peter that he is still looking for his cat and offers a reward of \$50. Peter nonchalantly takes the reward and admits that he killed the cat.

### Production

The episode was written by series writer Patrick Meighan in his second episode of the season, the first being "Road to Germany", and directed by former *King of the Hill* and *The Oblongs* director Julius Wu before the conclusion of the series' seventh production season.<sup>[3]</sup>

"420" has been noted for being the final appearance of the recurring character Kevin Swanson, the son of characters Joe and Bonnie

<b>"420"</b>	
<i>Family Guy</i> episode	
	
Brian and Stewie promote the legality of cannabis.	
<b>Episode no.</b>	Season 7 Episode 12
<b>Directed by</b>	Julius Wu
<b>Written by</b>	Patrick Meighan
<b>Production code</b>	6ACX16
<b>Original air date</b>	April 19, 2009 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Guest stars</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Phil LaMarr as Ollie Williams</li> <li>Kerrigan Mahan</li></ul>	
<b>Episode chronology</b>	
← <b>Previous</b>	<b>Next</b> →
"Not All Dogs Go to Heaven"	"Stew-Roids"
<i>Family Guy</i> (season 7) List of <i>Family Guy</i> episodes	



Swanson. Since the fifth season episode "Saving Private Brian", series creator Seth MacFarlane and other staff writers had planned on writing out the character. MacFarlane recalls not having ideas to write for the character.<sup>[4]</sup> During the episode's production, the character of James the cat was originally colored white, but MacFarlane decided that it bear orange fur after he thought that white was a fairly dull color. The featured musical number, "A Bag O' Weed," was based the *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* song "Me O' Bamboo"<sup>[5]</sup>.

In addition to the regular cast, voice actor Phil LaMarr and voice actor Kerrigan Mahan guest starred in the episode. Recurring guest voice actors Lori Alan, Chris Cox, actor Ralph Garman, writer Danny Smith, writer Alec Sulkin and writer John Viener also made minor appearances.<sup>[3]</sup>

"420", along with the seven other episodes from *Family Guy*'s eighth season and seven from the seventh season, was released on a three-disc DVD set in the United States on June 15, 2010. The DVDs included brief audio commentaries by Seth MacFarlane, various crew and cast members from several episodes,<sup>[6]</sup> a collection of deleted scenes, a special mini-feature that discussed the process behind animating "Road to the Multiverse", and a mini-feature entitled *Family Guy Karaoke*.<sup>[7][8]</sup> The set also includes a reprint of the script for the episode.<sup>[9][10]</sup>



Phil LaMarr provided the voice of recurring character Ollie Williams.

## Cultural references

Peter, who tries to shave Quagmire's cat in the episode, ends up killing it and cutting it six times because of the legend of cats having nine lives.<sup>[11]</sup> Earlier, he refers to films that mention the title in their scripting. As he is arresting Brian, one of the police officers states that he will not release him since he is a "family guy".<sup>[11][12]</sup> In their campaign, Brian and Stewie perform their musical number, "A Bag O' Weed", to the tune of "Me O' Bamboo" as featured in the film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. After cannabis is legalized, its effects include phenomenal ratings for *Doctor Who*.<sup>[11][12]</sup> Peter then tries to remember something but ends up remembering the names of celebrities whom he does not like. <sup>[11][12]</sup> While helping out with Carter's smear campaign, Peter comes up with an advertisement that involves Adolf Hitler claiming that the Holocaust was started by smoking cannabis.<sup>[11][12]</sup> He later tries to film a new advertisement which informs that unlike the events of the film *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*, he made it there earlier since he was not stoned<sup>[11][12]</sup>. Carter later tells Brian that he will release his novel with an Oprah's Book Club induction.<sup>[11][12]</sup>

## Reception



"420" was viewed by 7.40 million viewers on its original airdate, receiving a rating of 4.3/6 in Nielsen ratings.<sup>[13]</sup> The character Brian was awarded the 2009 Stoner of the Year award by the magazine *High Times* due to this episode, marking the first time an animated character received the honor.<sup>[14]</sup>

The episode received generally positive reviews from critics. Ahsan Haque of IGN rated the episode an 8.5/10, commenting that it "worked out quite well mainly due to the superb musical number". He called the storyline "pretty cohesive" with a "very few truly random jokes thrown in here", though he did criticize the killing of the cat as "over-the-top" and the large amount of blood which he called "disturbing".<sup>[11]</sup> Genevieve Koski of The A.V. Club stated that the episode "showed admirable restraint [...] with its pot-centric plot", and called the musical number "truly spectacular". She graded the episode B, behind the *Simpsons* episode "The Good, the Sad, and the Drugly" which received a rating of B+; and the *American Dad!* episode "Delorean Story-an" which received a rating of A.<sup>[15]</sup> The TV Critic's Robin Pierson gave the episode a 54/100; in his review, he appreciated the plot structure, especially the randomness of Peter's list of hated cultural icons. He did, however, criticize the featured musical number; he referred to it as a "waste of time" and claimed that "jokes about Texans, Michael Jackson and Helen Keller are so obvious."<sup>[16]</sup>

The Parents Television Council, a frequent critic of *Family Guy* and series creator Seth MacFarlane, branded a June 6, 2009 re-airing their "Worst TV Show of the Week", due to its emphasis on the legality of cannabis.<sup>[17]</sup>

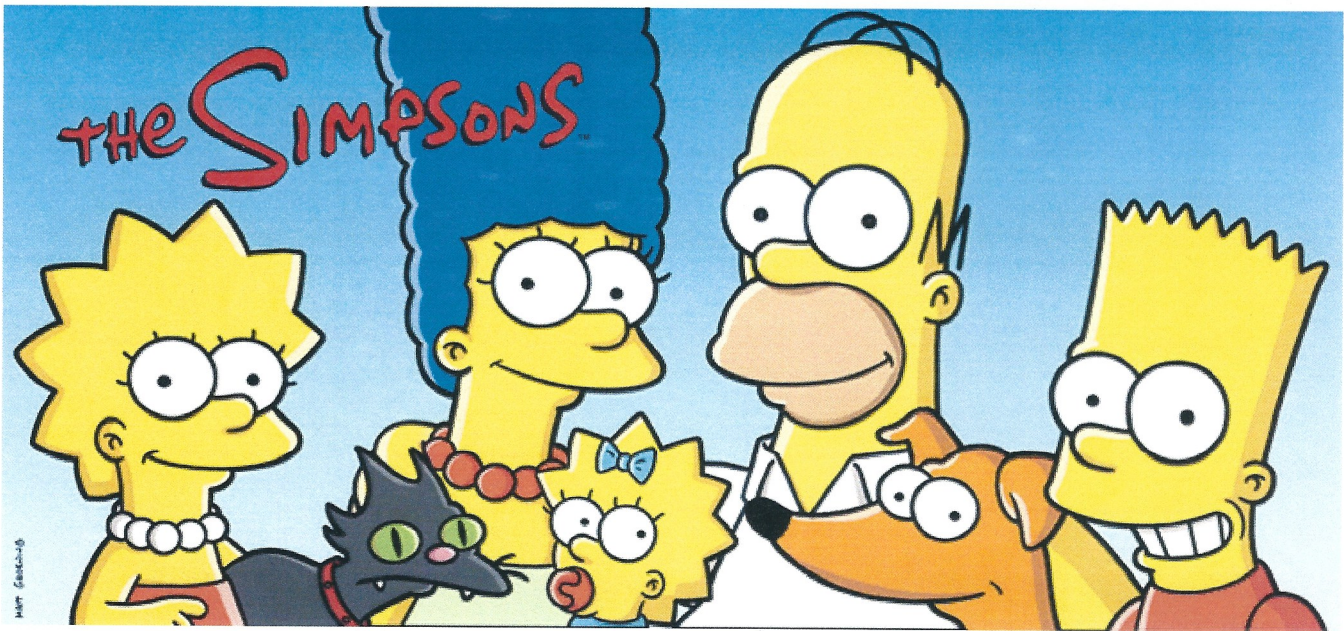
## Controversy

The Venezuelan government reacted negatively to the episode and banned *Family Guy* from airing on their local networks, which generally syndicate American programming. Local station Televen was threatened with financial sanctions for broadcasting the show, which was avoided by airing an episode of *Baywatch* instead, and they aired public service films as an apology. Venezuelan Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami stated that any cable stations which refuse to stop airing the series would be fined, and he also claimed that it promoted the use of cannabis.<sup>[18]</sup> The government then displayed the clip of which featured Brian and Stewie performing the featured number, and then stated that *Family Guy* is an example of how the United States supports cannabis use.<sup>[19]</sup>

## References

- ↑ "Family Guy: 'Episode 420' Episode Info". MSN. 2009. http://tv.msn.com/tv/episode/family-guy/episode-420/. Retrieved July 18, 2009.
- ↑ Grim, Ryan (April 20, 2009). "What 420 Means: The True Story Behind Stoners' Favorite Number". *The Huffington Post*.





There have been '420' references on **The Simpsons**.

In the re-run episode aired on April 20th, 1999, Homer mentions to Flanders that Barney's birthday is April 20th. Also, the jackpot sign in one scene, says \$420,000. Pretty concrete especially since they did decide to air that particular episode on April 20th, 1999.

In the episode 'Three Days of the Condo' when the family are attempting a huge jigsaw, Marge says 'It is getting late' and looks at a clock, which shows 4:20 as the time. ( [See Famous quotes.](#) )

Shirts with the '420' red-and blue interstate highway shield, (interstate 420 ?), have shown up on the sitcom **Will and Grace**.