

WikiLeaks' Assange to appear on Simpsons

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A post on the Simpsons' Twitter feed linked to a report which "exclusively" reveals that Assange -- battling extradition to Sweden to face rape allegations -- will appear on the February 19 episode.

Playing up the cloak-and-dagger aspect, it said series creator Matt Groening "heard a rumor that the polarizing and elusive activist who runs the whistle-blowing website was interested in guest-starring on the long-running show.

"So we asked our casting director Bonnie Pietila -- who had been able to unearth Thomas Pynchon and got Tony Blair to do the show -- to find Mr. Assange. And she did," said Simpsons exec producer Al Jean.

Assange recorded his lines at a location unknown to Simpsons producers, Jean said, noting that Assange is still under house arrest in Britain, and that he directed the WikiLeaks founder remotely from Los Angeles.

"I was just given a number to call," said Jean in Entertainment Weekly, which said "We couldn't wait to leak" the news.

In the landmark episode, Homer and Marge discover that Springfield residents are holding a secret meeting to kick them out of town, for all the trouble they've caused over the years.

In a bid to clear their names, the Simpsons arrange to meet with Assange, "who's sort of their new (Ned) Flanders," the Simpsons' irritatingly pious neighbor.

Jean acknowledged that Assange, wanted on rape charges in Sweden and by US authorities over the massive leaking of sensitive diplomatic and other information, is "a controversial figure."

"There was discussion internally whether or not to have him on the show, but ultimately we went ahead and did it," said Jean, noting that "there's nothing we did that has anything to do with the legal situation that he's in.

"We wanted to make sure it was satirical, and he was willing to do that," he added.

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