

SKINS AND MTV | SPIDER-MAN SLAMMED!

#1142 • FEBRUARY 18, 2011

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"We feel exactly like the Bad News Bears... a ragtag squad of misfits."
—Chris Pratt



PARKS AND RECREATION

THE SMARTEST COMEDY ON TV

101 Reasons We Love It



Entertainment

THE

101

Reasons We Love Parks and Recreation

Oh, *Parks and Recreation*, how do we love thee? Let us count the ways (101 of them, to be exact). Take a trip with us to scenic Pawnee, Ind., as we break down all the reasons to adore TV's smartest sitcom.

BY DAN SNIERSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ART STREIBER



(From left) Chris Pratt, Aubrey Plaza, Nick Offerman, Rob Lowe, Amy Poehler, Aziz Ansari, and Rashida Jones photographed on Feb. 2, 2011, in Los Angeles



WHEN PARKS AND RECREATION

debuted on NBC in April 2009, it was met with indifference (do we really need another *Office*-style mockumentary?) and head-scratching (an entire show about turning a pit into a park?). However, after sharpening the comedy and making a few adjustments in season 2 (goodbye, Paul Schneider; hello, Rob Lowe and Adam Scott), *Parks*—which follows Amy Poehler's Leslie Knope and other government staffers in the Indiana burg of Pawnee—won over critics and viewers with its blend of off-kilter yet sweetly optimistic humor. And then NBC left the series off its fall schedule. While fans were infuriated, the benching may have proved a blessing in disguise: When *Parks* returned on Jan. 20, it nabbed the prime Thursday-at-9:30 p.m. slot after *The Office*. ("It was frustrating to be shooting good shows and not have them be on," notes Poehler; "but I'm excited to have them be on in the space we've always wanted.") So far, season 3 is drawing an average audience of 5.6 million, but the drive to win hearts and minds is just beginning. Sums up Chris Pratt, who plays the dim shoe shiner Andy Dwyer: "We feel exactly like the *Bad News Bears*. We're a ragtag squad of misfits who, in order to maintain the life of our show, must pull off some sort of trick play that involves Rob Lowe. Don't count us out. We'll bite an ankle. We'll eye-gouge. You're going to have to kill us dead!" It's that fighting spirit that makes us love *Parks and Rec*. Here are 101 other things.



REASONS WE LOVE...

AMY POEHLER AS

Leslie Knope

1. The parks department deputy director might be prime time's most idealistic and, yes, committed character. "What's so fun about playing Leslie is she gets to be really sharply focused on things," notes Poehler. "And like a terrier, she won't let them go."

2. Leslie's drab wardrobe feels just right for a small-town

civil servant. Says Poehler: "As a rule, if I put something on and I'm like, 'That's cute!' then I would take it off."

3. Those quick-cut sequences where Leslie veers into Crazyville, whether she's reeling off her absurd excuses for shooting Ron in the head or running through a list of Pawnee's slogans.

4. She's so bad on Ann dates that when Ann takes her on a practice dinner, she relies on conversation cards that are labeled with subjects like "whales," "parades," and "electricity."

5. Leslie keeps her friends close and her icons closer, as evidenced by the framed photos of women in politics, like Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton.



6. Sample credit-card charges include a "bucket of cake," Jessica Simpson clip-in hair extensions, a man pillow, and tuition to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

7. When Ron says, "Okay, here's the situation...," she cuts him off by rapping "Parents Just Don't Understand."

8. The Knope-as-Obama "Hope" poster.

9. Her last name flies absurdly in the face of the spirit of the character. "After a while, you forget that it's a joke," says exec producer Greg Daniels. "But it seemed very funny that such an optimistic person would have such a negative name."

10. This quote: "He's got three crutches, and one of them is you. And the other two are crutches."