

## SAY WHAT?

# A Television Retrospective Looking back to the best of the bad shows

I hate classes. Yesterday, I missed one of the best episodes of *Gidget* because I had to take this stupid midterm.

I suppose I could watch something if I really tried, but there's no cable hookup in Murphy 111, and my history professor might get a little upset when "duh-DUH-duh-DUH...Like sands through the hourglass, so are The Days of Our Lives...doodle-oodle-oo" interrupts a deep discussion of the Cuban missile crisis.

Of course, soap operas are one thing, but if you want to get down to the real nitty-gritty of television history, we'll have to go back many years, to when we were mere lads and lassies with no further concerns than who was going to get to play commander of the backyard SWAT team and lead the attack against Zsa Zsa, Old Lady Hubble's killer poodle.

So let's talk el cheapo Japanese

JOHN BLAND

less filling

foam-rubber badly-dubbed Rodan/Godzilla Mothra rip-offs from hell.

Let's talk pre-Oprah Geraldo Donahue bisexual nuns from Alabama or People's Superior Supreme Divorce Court Wheel of Jeopardy.

Let's grab a big bag of Fritos, a couple Ho-Ho's and a can of Pepsi, lie down on our stomachs with our eyes about four inches from the screen, kick our legs in the air and *watch some damn TV!*

The Banana Splits. This is a golden oldie. How can anyone forget "Danger Island," "Robin Hood on Mars" and "Squiddly Diddly"? How can anyone forget the lovable hosts

sliding down that slide — Binkman, Measle, Goober and Stud? (No, sorry, those guys were the leaders of the Fuquay-Varina chapter of Hell's Angels.)

The Banana Splits were Bingo, Fleagle, Snooper and ... who? Who was the fourth Banana Split? What was the fourth Banana Split? Bingo was a Monchichi, Fleagle was a beagle, and Snooper was the elephant with the Vuarnets. All right, all right, look at the question on page 9 in the Omnibus survey and give us the name and species of the fourth Banana Split, if you can. Grad students, you're eligible, too. Remember, you're doing this for the good of mankind.

By the way, if you remember the theme song, and I think we all do, you can sing those words the next time you listen to Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier." I think there was a little plagiarism here on Bob's part.

The Addams Family. There's bad bad television, like *Gomer Pyle*, and then there's good bad television, like this bizarre show. I've been trying all my life to get my hair as long as Cousin Itt's, but it just keeps getting more and more like Uncle Fester's.

Ultraman. You could probably rank this with *Space Giants* and *Spectreman*, but this was the first, and the best, cruising along with the Hiata and the rest of the Space Patrol looking for six-foot tall actors in foam-rubber suits kicking around Tokyo's paper skyline. God, what a job!

The Land of the Lost. The only entry from the world of Sid and Marty Krofft. We're talking "Attack of the Stupid White People" here. However, the slimy-green, elevator-shod Sleestak were too good to waste in such a lame show. I'd like to see them make a comeback attempt, kind of like Donny Osmond. Chaka could

be their manager. (P.S. Everybody start using the word 'Sleestak.' We could start a trend here.)

Speed Racer. "Here he comes, here comes Speed Racer, he's a demon on wheels..." Ahh, the strains of classical music! Hey, gang, let's hop in the old Mach 5, go cruising over to Le Mans and find out if the mysterious Racer X is really Speed's father or if he's just hanging around because he lusts after Chim-Chim.

Gilligan's Island. Personally, my favorite episode is the one where they try to get off the island. Then again, that one where they try to get off the island is also good, and then, of course, there's the one where they try to get off the island...

As you know, this is only a partial list. And if you'll excuse me, I've got to go now, so I can sing along with the Brady kids.

Thank God for WTBS.

## Come back, Danger-prone Daphne; we miss you!

CHARLES BRITAIN

that's all, folks

Since the break-up of Sonny and Cher in the mid-'70s, scholars and philosophers have lamented the decline of western civilization and the end of American prominence as we knew it.

I admit that until this weekend I had never really thought about the cultural and moral collapse of our society (unless you count discussions after a heated 30 minutes of the now defunct *Morton Downey Jr. Show*), but as I celebrated a timeless Saturday morning ritual, I was forced to confront face to face the downfall of the last bastion of true art.

I admit that most Saturday mornings are a time for one thing — sleep! Once a year, however, there is a special Saturday when children around the globe crawl out of bed to enjoy what makes this country great — cartoons. Last Saturday was that magical morning when the major networks unveiled their new contributions to cartoondom.

Being an educated and art-loving kind of a guy, I set my alarm clock for 7:30 a.m. to make certain I didn't miss *The New Adventures of the Gummi Bears* and *The Winnie the Pooh Hour*. At 8:50 a.m., I woke up to catch the last ten minutes of the madcap antics of Pooh, Christopher Robin, Tigger and the rest of the gang in the Hundred Acre Woods (not to be confused with the now defunct Big Woods near Kenan). Grabbing my blanket, my roommate's industrial size box of Keebler Animal Crackers and nursing a slight hangover, I settled down for a morning of cartoon appreciation. I must admit I was disappointed.

Remember the "good ole days" when Bugs Bunny was an hour and a

half and Speed Buggy sputtered across our screens? Well, those thrilling days of yesteryear are dead. Now kids are watching future classics like *Rude Dog & the Dweebs* and *Dink, the Little Dinosaur* as they gulp down their sugar-fortified Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle (or is it Ninja Teenage Turtle Mutants?) cereal.

As if this isn't bad enough, some genius at NBC programming decided that three mediocre feature films were not enough, and blessed us with *The Karate Kid Cartoon*. In this one, Daniel, Miyagi-san and an Okinawan girl named Taki wander from Saturday to Saturday searching for a sacred totem holding the power of Miyagi's karate (Yeah, right, and I thought part III was bad!).

Not to be outdone, ABC is hoping to cash in on the movie tie-in idea with the new *Beetlejuice* cartoon which features animated projectile vomiting fu (a la Joe Bob). I liked Micheal Keaton in the movie, but I haven't seen anything this bad since the Wondertwins and Gleep the purple space monkey joined the Superfriends or Scrappy Doo teamed up with his Uncle Scooby.

Speaking of Scrappy, I used to love watching Scooby, Shaggy, Freddie, Thelma and Danger-prone Daphne cruise around the countryside in their orange and blue Mystery Machine. I didn't care where they got the money for gas and all those Scooby Snacks or if they wore any other clothes. I just wanted to solve a mystery and

listen to their cool chase music! It all changed when Scrappy came along. I guess they thought he was cute running around screaming "PUPPY POWER!" at the top of his munchkin lungs. I just thought he was damn annoying.

While I'm on the subject of obnoxious life forms, maybe it's just me, but every time I see Pee Wee Herman bounce around his playhouse I think about how nice it would be to give him an Uzi lobotomy. Do you ever get the feeling that there was a little too much in-breeding in his family tree? And just think, this guy replaced Bugs, Daffy and Foghorn Leghorn on CBS.

Have you seen what's been done to Bugs Bunny and the rest of Mel Blanc's children? Their show has been shoved to an 11 a.m. time slot and the cartoons have been edited so poorly that it's often impossible to notice anything resembling a plot.

Remember when Daffy tried to convince Elmer that it wasn't duck season, but Elmer, being a true American sportsman, blew Daffy's bill off anyway? Today's young cartoon viewers will never be able to appreciate that because all they see are clips of some black duck walking around with

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his bill on top of his head.

I understand that violence in children's television is a problem, but how can we edit Bugs Bunny and still allow a show like the *American Gladiators* to run on Saturday morning? I sat for 30 minutes and watched six "gladiators" with names like Gemini, Nitro, and Zap try to beat the crap out of contestants in Coliseum-style combat. Remember the Roman Empire? What's next? Lions and Philistines, or — better yet — how about some nice healthy public executions?

Saturday mornings are a time of escape. They're a time when we can

all become children again and remember what it was like when all we worried about was whether Wonder Woman liked Aquaman or Superman (I personally believe she and Aquaman had something going. He did ride around with her a lot in the invisible jet).

Today's cartoon viewers are growing up in a faster world where Barbie is a rock'n' roll thrash chick with big hair and Ken looks like a Skid Row reject. I'm not saying it's a terrible world we live in these days, but without guys like Grape Ape, Mighty Mouse and Hong Kong Phooey, it sure is a lot lonelier.

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