

Coping with Grown-Ups

UK TV mock documentary : 19[94] : dir. [Brian Lighthill} : Channel 4
prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

30 min

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ≠ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2336a	1	1	0	467	- - - - -	No	<i>unseen</i>

Sunday Times review:

"A comical look at adult behaviour from the point of view of a youngster."

"Four junior anthropologists examine the social characteristics of the dinosaur species known as grown ups. The format is that of a serious documentary, but with diagrams by a toddler. Apparently, children view adults thus: the typical mother has a face covered with worry and no sense of fashion. Identifying expressions include "ask your father" and "tidy your room".

The typical father has a face covered with a newspaper (sadly unimaginative, that one) and no sense of humour. Identifying expressions include "ask your mother" and "what time do you call this?". Common to both is a sad loss of figure and/or hair, and any sense of logic."

No further information currently available. Programmes of this kind, of course, reveal nothing whatsoever about children's actual perspective on adult behaviour – because they are written by adults for the amusement of other adults, who are deemed to share a set of core assumptions about kids. "**The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4**" and its sequel purported to view the world through a boy's eye, but in reality viewed it through the sardonic eye of author Sue Townsend. In the same way, the sensibilities of the central figure Kevin in "**The Wonder Years**" were distilled, edited, watered down for TV, reinterpreted and in general distorted beyond recognition by the expedient of ironic adult voice-overs, rendering all adolescent experience as an inept imitation of adult life. This is both reassuring to the latent parent in all adults, and strips the growing generation of its capacity to shock and challenge the values of the preceding one. It is generally done in the name of "comedy", but underlying it is a thoroughgoing contempt of the real opinions and behaviour it pastiches.

The three (to date) "**LOOK WHO'S TALKING**" films had a gas transplanting adult sensibilities and observations onto the bodies of unsuspecting toddlers, while the latest offering from American TV in the same vein must be "**Malcolm in the Middle**". For my money you can keep all of this faux self-criticism, give me authentic children's observations, unfiltered by adult agendas, any day. The sobering truth might just be that children don't pay much mind to adults at all, but get on with their own business and inner life. But parents do seem to have this need for constant reassurance from their children – even under the guise of gentle mockery.

See subject index under **COMEDY** and **THE CHILD AS PASSIVE SPECTATOR**.