

Junior Showtime

UK TV variety series : 19[69-74] : dir. :
 ? x ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

Presenters: Bobby Bennett; *Mark Curry; Bonnie Langford*

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The Golden Age of Children's Television note:

"...An American visitor to **"The Five O'Clock Club"** was rotund comedian Stubby Kaye, and he moved on to present a sort of mini **"Opportunity Knocks"** titled **"Stubby's Silver Star Show"**. This set the pace for further precocious brats *[sic]* to sing everything from "Hound Dog" to "The Good Ship Lollipop" on series like **"Junior Showtime"**, introduced by Bobby Bennett. **"Junior Showtime"** had a morbid fascination with an outfit called The Poole Family. There were about ten of them to start with and their numbers seemed to increase week by week until they occupied the entire studio. Their "star" was the youngest member Glyn, who had an extremely minor hit in 1973 with "Milly Molly Mandy". The title says it all. However, **"Junior Showtime"** did manage to unearth one talented act - it was the programme on which singing impressionist Joe Longthorne made his TV debut."

Time Out retrospective note:

"Spectacularly dreadful. Brought to you from the City Varieties Theatre, Leeds, the show encompassed all the vilest elements of Old Tyme Music Hall, enacted by a legion of talentless, pre-pubescent stage school rejects doing strange, unfathomable and unentertaining things in leotards. Presented by Bonnie Langford and Mark Curry (then ten, and already living proof of the evils of tartrazine), the show was a pederast's wet dream. As to the future? To paraphrase the old commercial; nothing works better - than anodyne."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Television Companion", "History of Television", "Into the Box of Delights - a History of Children's Television", "Television's Greatest Hits" or "25 Years of ITV - 1955-1980"]

No further information currently available. It was abundantly clear from all they wrote that the *Time Out* critics had a heartfelt contempt of children, even though they considered themselves experts on paederasts' wet dreams. *The Golden Age of Children's Television* is equally irritating in tone. Written for adult trivia fans, author Geoff Tibballs lays on the sarcasm with a trowel, as though the only permissible attitude to old children's television was one of haughty derision.

In all likelihood, of course, it was every bit as tacky as the critics claim, and belongs up there with **"Minipops"** and **"Child's Play"** contending for the title of most child-exploitative TV show, but if it was a largely talent-free zone, then the same could be said of **"Opportunity Knocks"**, **"Stars in Their Eyes"**, or any other in a long line of amateur variety shows. There has always

been an appetite for them, and not among child audiences, so it is adult tastes that are in question, not theirs.

What makes performing-kiddie shows of this sort vaguely offensive is not that paederasts might get off on them (where's the harm in that?) but that **parents** get off on them (more precisely, mothers), tarting their kids up like Cindy dolls to satisfy some maudlin inner need – the child as extension of mummy's ego, the child as Marilyn Monroe in miniature, the child as a darling thing to be hugged and cooed over. Behind each of these "talentless, pre-pubescent stage school rejects" was a talentless ageing parent pushing hard.

See subject index under **THEATRE & VAUDEVILLE / CHILD PERFORMERS**.