

# The 100 Greatest Kids' TV Shows

UK TV compilation marathon : 2001 : dir. : Channel 4 : ? min  
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

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| 5500 | 2.5   | 0       | 0      | 1,287 | - | - | - | - | - | No          | August 2001 |

Broadcast Channel 4: 27/08/01. The last few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century presented the media with a perfect occasion to conduct their own ad hoc round-ups of the century's most influential people, most important films, best popular music etc etc. So 2001 is perhaps a little soon to be dipping back into the same baskets, yet Channel 4 has strewn the year with surveys similar to this one (see for example "[Top Ten Teen Idols](#)"). One might think such retrospectives were a clear invitation to the over-25s to bask for a short while in the kind of programming they used to enjoy – a brief escape from a television saturated with material aimed at the apolitical, pill-popping post-Thatcherite generation, breast-fed on tabloid culture. Ah but no, Channel 4 are too shrewd for that. Their retrospectives are chiefly an opportunity for that same generation to thumb their noses at everything which preceded their own miraculous lives. And so it goes with this one.

It's some reflection on the value of their poll that the two programmes topping Channel 4's list were not even children's programmes anyway! – "**The Muppet Show**" (no.2) and "**The Simpsons**" (no.1) never purported to be made for kids, were never broadcast in children's TV slots, and hence not surprisingly are best favoured by adults. "**Batman**" came in at no.48, forgetting that that series too was made to amuse parents as much as their offspring, with a camp self-mockery certainly never found in the comics. "**Roland Rat**", at 37, was not even a show, but a standing feature of the TV-AM breakfast programme, also not made for kids.

About half of the titles voted for were animated series, which fall outside the scope of this archive. I've listed the top ten verbatim, but omitted all other animated titles. The remainder are given, as by the programme, in reverse order: Hardly any of the selected programmes predate 1970. Only two are continental productions (discounting "**The Magic Roundabout**") and there are very few live action American series, although US imports of that sort completely dominated children's TV in the sixties. There is not a single children's serial, of the many hundreds that have been broadcast, some of them very good indeed. Even among the animated titles, some older favourites were conspicuous by their absence – "**Popeye**" for example. It won't take too much thought to work out what age group cast the bulk of the votes here. It's all such a pity, because a proper survey of children's television over the last fifty years would have been both entertaining and of great value to this archive. Typically though, even when television casts its eyes over the past, the only sensibilities and judgements that matter are those of the *now* generation (who don't give a toss about the past anyway). Post-modernism is anti-historicist, and so condones this disrespect for culture that predates the vanishing attention span.

## Channel 4's believe-it-or-not all-time 100 favourite kids' TV shows :

|     |                                |         |                                                                                                             |
|-----|--------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 100 | ~~~~~                          |         |                                                                                                             |
|     | Do Not Adjust Your Set         |         | Proto-Monty Python surreal comedy series                                                                    |
|     | Junior Show Time               | 1969-74 | Talent show                                                                                                 |
|     | Muffin the Mule                | 1946-55 | Early singlaong prog with string puppet and piano                                                           |
|     | The Singing Ringing Tree       | 1956    | European                                                                                                    |
| 95  | Magpie                         | 1968-80 | ITV learn-and-do magazine launched explicitly to compete with the BBC's "Blue Peter"                        |
|     | H.R. Pufnstuf                  | 1969    | Fantasy musical series with Jack Wild                                                                       |
|     | White Horses                   | 1968    | Yugoslavian serial set in the Camargue                                                                      |
|     | Screen Test                    | 1969-84 | Movie quiz show with various hosts, but the "tests" were on simple observation, not on films at all         |
| 90  | ~~~~~                          |         |                                                                                                             |
|     | Runaround                      | 1975-80 | Action quiz game with Mike Reid                                                                             |
|     | Pinky and Perky                |         | Singing twin pig puppets                                                                                    |
|     | Just William                   | 1976    | Richmal Crompton's scamp opera series (one of them)                                                         |
|     | Cheggers Plays Pop             | 1977-   | Pop magazine hosted by junior celeb Keith Chegwin                                                           |
|     | The Secret Garden              | 1975    | BBC classic costume serial                                                                                  |
| 80  | The Adventures of Robin Hood   |         | Costume swashbuckler series with Richard Greene                                                             |
|     | Tales of the Riverbank         | 1959-   | Storytelling series using live animals in natural surroundings, but not too attentive to their comforts     |
|     | Vison On                       | 1964-76 | Magazine for deaf children                                                                                  |
|     | We are the Champions           | 1978-84 | Junior version of "Jeux Sans Frontieres" holiday camp runaround competitions, hosted by Ron Pickering       |
|     | Catweazle                      |         | Mediaeval wizard transported to present day series                                                          |
| 75  | The Adventures of Skippy       | 1966-69 | Australian boy-and-his-kangaroo series                                                                      |
|     | Michael Bentine's Potty Time   | 1973    | Comic puppet show with ex-Goon Bentine                                                                      |
| 70  | How?                           | 1976-82 | Learn & do pop science magazine                                                                             |
|     | The Famous Five                | 1978    | Enid Blyton serial                                                                                          |
|     | The Double Deckers             | 1970-71 | US Rowan & Martin style zany magazine shot in London studios – kids, cartoons, music                        |
| 65  | The Record Breakers            | 1972-   | Guinness Book of Records sponsored strange feat show, presenter Roy Castle.                                 |
|     | Lassie                         | 1954-74 | US boy-and-his-dog series with Tommy Rettig                                                                 |
|     | Jackanory                      | 1965-96 | BBC celebrity storytelling slot                                                                             |
|     | The Adventures of Black Beauty | 1972    | Series <b>very</b> loosely based on Anna Sewell                                                             |
| 60  | ~~~~~                          |         |                                                                                                             |
|     | John Craven's Newsround        | 1972    | BBC news bulletin suitably bowdlerised for small minds – kittens up trees being top news items              |
|     | Metal Mickey                   | 1979-81 | Children and their robot pal series, produced by ex-Monkee Mickey Dolenz                                    |
|     | Animal Magic                   | 1964-84 | Zoos are <b>fun</b> programme, with voice mimic Johnny Morris putting opinions in mouths of dumber animals. |
|     | Pipkins                        | 1973-81 |                                                                                                             |
|     | Wide Awake Club / Wac-a-Day    | 1984-92 | Saturday morning knockabout magazine                                                                        |
| 50  | Fingerbobs                     | 1972    | Finger-puppet series                                                                                        |
|     | Tiswas                         | 1974-82 | ATV Saturday morning knockabout game-show with Chris Tarrant & Sally James                                  |
|     | Batman                         | 1966-68 | ABC/Fox spoof superhero action series                                                                       |
|     | Press Gang                     | 1989-93 | Teens do their own paper soap-series                                                                        |
|     | The Tomorrow People            | 1973-79 | SF time travel series                                                                                       |
| 45  | Multi-Coloured Swap Shop       | 1976-81 | BBC Saturday morning mag with Noel Edmonds, John Craven, Keith Chegwin                                      |
|     | Why Don't You...?              | 1973-95 | Kid-hosted (alternatives to watching TV) learn & do school holiday magazine                                 |
|     | Play School / Play Away        | 1964-84 | Pre-school song and storytelling series with Brian Cant.                                                    |
|     | Byker Grove                    | 1990-   | Teen soap set in Newcastle youth club                                                                       |
| 40  | ~~~~~                          |         |                                                                                                             |
|     | Crackerjack                    | 1955-84 | BBC after school magazine-cum-quiz show with Ed Stewart, Peter Glaze etc. Regular prize: pencils.           |
|     | The Sooty Show                 | 1953-   | Venerable glove-puppet show with Harry Corbett                                                              |
|     | TV-AM – Roland Rat             | 1985    | <b>Not</b> a children's programme                                                                           |
|     | The Adventure Game             | 1980-86 | Puzzle-solving celebrity gameshow                                                                           |
| 35  | The Banana Splits              | 1968-70 | Rowan & Martin influenced "wacky" Saturday morning cartoon magazine                                         |
|     | The Basil Brush Show           | 1968-80 | Variety show hosted by glove-puppet fox                                                                     |

|    |                               |         |                                                                                                 |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Sesame Street                 | 1969-   | Seminal US early learning magazine with muppets, celebrities, songs, animations etc.            |
|    | Blue Peter                    | 1958-   | BBC flagship learn & do magazine with demure "Sunday school" presenters and "good scout" ethos. |
| 30 | ~~~~~                         |         |                                                                                                 |
|    | SM TV Live                    | 1998-   | Saturday morning magazine                                                                       |
| 25 | Jim'll Fix It                 | 1975-89 | Kids' wishes granted by ageing 60s DJ Jimmy Saville                                             |
|    | Maid Marian and her Merry Men | 1989-94 | Robin Hood sitcom series for the "girl-power" generation                                        |
| 20 | Worzel Gummidge               | 1979-81 | Mild adventures with living scarecrow Jon Pertwee                                               |
|    | Knightmare                    | 1987-94 | Dungeons & Dragons inspired puzzle action gameshow.                                             |
|    | Rentaghost                    | 1976-84 | Haunted castle sitcom                                                                           |

...and finally, ta-taaa!!

|    |                                          |         |                                                                               |
|----|------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | [He-Man and the Masters of the Universe] |         | Crap merchandising-driven US animated series                                  |
| 9  | Doctor Who                               | 1963-89 | Seminal BBC time travel series                                                |
| 8  | [Scooby-Doo Where Are You?]              |         | US animated "Ghostbusters"-style comedy sleuth series                         |
| 7  | Rainbow                                  | 1971-92 | Storytelling with Geoffrey Hayes and a family of cloying animal glove puppets |
| 6  | [Mr Benn]                                |         | Animated series                                                               |
| 5  | Grange Hill                              | 1978-   | Award-winning BBC comprehensive school soap                                   |
| 4  | [Bagpuss]                                |         | Animated series about a stuffed shop-cat                                      |
| 3  | [Dangermouse]                            |         | Animated series about a superspy mouse                                        |
| 2  | The Muppet Show                          |         | <b>Not</b> a children's programme                                             |
| 1  | The Simpsons                             |         | Certainly <b>not</b> a children's programme                                   |