

ARTS & LEISURE

Weekend review: PBS vs. the 'toons

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I found myself with some free time this weekend so I tried to recapture the carefree weekend mornings of my youth and watch a little nonsensical television.

On Saturday I watched one half hour of "Garfield and Friends" from 11 to 11:30 a.m. To my chagrin, Garfield was not the principle actor in the first segment. I guess the "Pig Detective" is one of his "Friends".

We find Mr. Pig reading a Detective novel in the barn yard while his friends (a rooster, and a chick) try to persuade him to come help them dig for worms. He declines and they make a few jokes about him being the only one fat enough to scare the worms to the surface.

Finally, the Pig's "friends" give up and leave him to his book. The audience is privy to the Pig's images of himself as the hero of the novel.

Detective Pig narrowly escapes some potentially dangerous situations (i.e. a safe falling on his head.) His salvation is not due to his superior cunning, but rather a result of happy coincidence.)

One situation finds Detective Pig being thrown into the water by the "bad guys." This is no problem for him however, he simply floats downstream and pulls himself out of the nearest water pump.

At the end of the segment, Mr. Pig is so lost in his detective novel that he totally loses touch with reality. He chases his friends around the barnyard referring to them as Dr. Cluck and Pinhead (the villains of the novel).

A child watching this program may see that it is okay to joke about the negative physical qualities of your friends (i.e. fat jokes); luck is more important than intellect when trying to catch the bad guy; any situation can be easily gotten out of; and it is okay to blur the lines of reality even if it means that you might hurt someone thinking that they are someone else.

I was then overcome by a deluge of commercials touting everything from sneakers to Fruit-Loops.

During the Nike commercial there were at least twenty fast scene changes accompanied by blaring rock music and kids having a great time just because they owned a pair of Nikes.

The next scenario dealt with Robo-Cop toys. It was very slick and it used lighting and color to their best advantage.

The commercial for the Barbie Soda Shop made me want to buy one! It featured two cherubic little girls (blondes

of course) having the time of their lives pouring the soda in the top and serving it to Barbie and friends (dolls not included.) The last commercial (thank God) was a Fruit Loop commercial in cartoon form.

The aforementioned commercials had a few things in common:

- They were all for products that are not essential for life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness, but the products were made to seem essential;

- They all featured actors the same age as the target group;

- They all had lots of fast action (although it was more pronounced in the commercials aimed at boys); and

- None had minorities in them.

My next dose of cartoon mania, following the commercials, was in the form of Garfield himself.

This segment was a study of cat controlling man. The general gist was that John gave Garfield his little black book so that he could not get into any more trouble with the ladies and when he wants it back, Garfield refuses to cough it up.

Instead, Garfield gives the book to Odie to bury in the yard. There ensues a lot of violence between Garfield and John (on one extreme this could promote cruelty toward animals in children).

Finally, John begins to look in the yard, but instead of taking the realistic approach and looking for fresh dirt, he digs up the entire yard!

This was getting to be too much for an old timer like me so I decided to do the rest of my time on Sunday (besides it was time for lunch).

Sunday morning dawned bright and blustery so I did what any other red-blooded American kid would do, I turned on the TV.

I chose the PBS station, first, because there were no commercials and second, because all of the other programs were aimed at sinners.

I came upon a program called "Sunny Dale Station" where all was not particularly sunny because the Boss had taken away all of the trains.

The adults in this story spoke like children. They had disjointed conversations that jumped from topic to topic.

The children on the show lied to the adults to make them happy. They said that the tasins were coming back and that Stacey Jones (Sally Duvall) was going to be made head of the station.

Two of the older characters (they never said their names) were discussing what to serve at Stacey Jones' congratulations party. They came up with celery, raw potatoes and candy (which definitely does not promote good

nutrition to the kids who watch the show).

Stacey was also given a broach as a token of their esteem.

When Stacey disabused them of the idea that she was going to become the head of the station or that the trains were ever coming back, they took away the broach and cancelled the party. No punishment, however, was meted out to the liars.

The older lady at once developed a tooth ache (probably from all of the candy) and the other characters gave her some advice about how to deal with it (put ice on it, etc.). It was too far gone to take care of right there so they worked as a team to get a train to stop at the station to take her to the dentist.

A day later, the station receives word that what they did was a brave thing and the Boss was going to reinstate their trains. The Magic Conductor (Ringo Starr) appears to bestow the moral, "If you do the right thing, even though it's wrong in the Institution's eyes, things will work out for you."

This story used age, appropriate language, imagery, and well-known stars to keep the child's attention until the end.

The moral of the story promoted a higher level of moral reasoning than most children in the age group that watch the show are capable of at this stage of their development. However,

exposing them to this higher level may facilitate their use of it.

Some of the other values expressed in the program should have been notified (i.e. nutritional information). I found this program much more enjoyable and meaningful than the other program that I watched.

Elizabeth

From 12

considering her obvious dramatic talent, it is easy to imagine her as a lawyer.

But she likes what she's doing now. Doing the play is a way of working through the lingering effects of her addiction. Satisfaction comes in sharing her experience and touching the lives of others.

"One man called the day he got out of prison to ask how he could get into treatment," she said.

Alsedek "found" Hissner doing a four-minute section of this play at an audition at Mt. Gretna.

"I always wanted to act, but I was so green.. I didn't know you weren't supposed to do your own stuff," Hissner said grinning. "The director asked me what play I had gotten it from and I said 'Oh, I just made it up.'"

Alsedek, however, was inspired by her performance. He helped her later to write the play around it.



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