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METRO in

Children not what

Children's TV was once at the heart of the schedules and a Saturday morning staple – but has now been banished from our main channels. Can it face off the challenge from apps, social networking and budget cuts? Here's an article **ETAN SMALLMAN** made earlier...

NOSTALGIA ain't what it used to be. While adults can look back on their childhoods with fond memories of TV shows that were raucous, anarchic and a little bit educational, some parents fear today's children will reflect on a cultural black hole.

Perhaps all they'll have to reminisce about will be Facebook chats, hours spent on their iPads and an isolated existence gawping at YouTube clips in their bedrooms.

In December, the BBC moved its children's programmes from BBC1 to its two dedicated digital channels for youngsters. ITV made the move about six years earlier.

Susan Stranks, a campaigner for national children's radio and founder of Abracadabra, the world's first digital radio station for children,

was strongly against the change. The former Magpie presenter said: 'I think children shouldn't be ghettoised and they should be on the mainstream so-called adult stations. Because if children are included, it civilises all of us.'

The BBC said it was following its audience, with only five per cent of child viewers watching BBC1.

Back in 1964, there was a similar outcry – when the corporation axed its much-loved radio slot Children's Hour because its listeners had been wooed by TV.

Peter Purves, who presented Blue Peter in the 1960s and 1970s, said: 'When there were fewer options on TV for children, I think many of them would watch at least some current affairs programmes and news.'

'That was, I think, a good thing that doesn't seem to happen nowadays



1990s | Pat Sharp

Host of CITV's Fun House

Favourite show ever:

Grange Hill

Favourite show today: **'No idea – I'm 51 years old!'**

Favourite character: **The Wolves on What's Up Doc?**

'Proper Saturday morning TV was brilliant, appealing to adults as well as kids. It's all been replaced by cooking programmes.'

1970s | Peter Purves

Blue Peter presenter, 1967-1978

Favourite show ever: **Original Doctor Who and Blue Peter**

Favourite show today: **'I can't comment I'm getting on quite a bit now'**

Favourite character: **Zebedee in The Magic Roundabout**

'Today's TV for children seems to be varied and loud. I wish there were fewer cartoons and rather mindless programmes.'

1980s | Andi Peters

Presenter from CBBC's Broom Cupboard

Favourite show ever: **Byker Grove**

Favourite show today: **Friday Download**

Favourite character: **Edd The Duck**

'The budgets have fallen because they need to make more to fill all the digital channels. That said, I think the quality is still there.'



Blue Peter still gets more than

2,000 letters and emails a week

Sources: Ofcom, BBC, OnePoll, Radio Times

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find TV is Tiswas...

and it shows in the poor general knowledge I witness in younger teenagers.'

In contrast, another, more recent former Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq, now a mother to one-year-old Covey, thinks children's TV is in rude health with 'something for everyone'.

She said: 'My son already seems to love Peppa Pig and he's only just past one. He chuckles away at the jokes and I wonder how can he possibly understand, but he does seem to get bits of it.'

FORMER CITV and CBBC controller Nigel Pritchard helped launch the BBC's digital children's channels in 2002.

There are now about 30 digital TV stations devoted to children but he said only one per cent of original programmes are made in this country.

But Mr Pickard said that did not necessarily mean a decline in quality.

'The standard of children's programmes is probably better than it's ever been,' he said.

'In the past ten years, I think there's been a real strength and depth right across the board. Without a doubt, the

UK is leading the world in pre-school programming, with shows from Teletubbies to Peppa Pig.'

His own slapstick pre-school series Tickety Toc, which is on every weekday on Channel 5's Milkshake! and the Nick Jr channel, has been sold to Norway, Canada, Turkey and Taiwan.

The BBC Trust is undertaking a review into children's services to see how well it serves young audiences.

Children and parents can contribute on its website until May 31.

CBBC's return to the main channels is not 'in the scope' of the review but perhaps there would be little point.

Earlier this month, Google's executive chairman Eric Schmidt declared online video sites had already defeated TV.

But Mr Pickard argues adults should feel nervous because youngsters are usually the first to adapt to new media.

'In terms of technology, children are naturally inquisitive, they're naturally experimental. They don't really see barriers,' he added. 'The key elements of children's broadcasting are the same as they've always been - high quality storytelling, great characters and innovation.'



2000s | Konnie Huq
Blue Peter's longest-serving female presenter
Favourite show ever: *Press Gang*
Favourite show today: *Horrible Histories*
Favourite character: *Peppa Pig's dad*
'Watching CITV and CBBC as a child didn't do me any harm... and probably taught me a lot!'

2010s | Dick and Dom
Double Bafta award-winning CBBC hosts
Favourite show ever: *Tiswas*
Favourite show today: *Deadly 60*
Favourite character: *Diddy Dick and Dom*
'We're lucky to be associated with the BBC it still regards kids' programming as a very important area.'

29%
of TV viewing by children is done alone

34%
The CBBC channel reaches of six- to 12-year-olds each week

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