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El Bicho's Hive

A Collection of Reviews Covering the Worlds of Art and Entertainment alongside other Snobbish Ramblings.

Friday, October 10, 2008 The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show - The Complete Series

Thomas Wolfe was right. You can't go home again. With the advent of the Saturday morning shows of my youth making their way to DVD, I have discovered some are still enjoyable to my adult sensibilities while others leave me disappointed and scratching my head over the suspect tastes of El Bicho Past. Sad to say, *The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show* falls into the latter category. While I never reminisced about the show with friends, once I saw the title I instantly remembered it as a zany sketch show that I enjoyed as a kid.

Bill, Mark, and Brett were The Hudson Brothers, a minor pop trio that had a TV variety hour on CBS Wednesday night during the summer of 1974. The combination of musical performances and comedy sketches was very similar to *Sonny and Cher*, and *Tony Orlando and Dawn*, which was no coincidence as the same production company made them. For some reason, the show morphed into the half-hour long *The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show* airing on Saturdays.

The show had a basic template. The brothers opened the show and encountered Fabulous Freddie, a child actor who posed as Vice President of Children's Programming. After offering a treat to the brothers who would politely decline ("No thanks. We're trying to cut down"), they would lip-synch a song. Next up was my favorite segment of the series: Rob Hull and Emu. Even over thirty years later, their bits still are impressive because Hull's puppetry skills make Emu realistic and it's hard not to laugh at the sheer silliness and havoc Hull creates. After the break, the "Razzle Dazzle Wrap Up" presented a series of sketches, some of them recurring like Bill trying to read from "Book of Strange Things," a group of Frankensteins who create people of different occupations, and "Sam Bear Private Eye." The show closed with the brothers not wanting to end the show and a net would have to drag them out.

Supporting the Hudson brothers was a cast of regulars that featured Billy Van, from the hysterical *Hilarious House of Frightenstein*, and Murray Langston, who would go on to become The Unknown Comic from Chuck Barris' *The Gong Show*.

What's amazing in these sixteen episodes is the limited amount of content. Minus the commercial time and accompanying bumpers, the opening and closing credits, and the repurposed introductions to sketches, the show only runs 15 minutes. The lip-synch and the overuse of laugh tracks and audience response is dated and hard to take, especially when the humor is nowhere near the level of the canned response.

Although he said he liked it, nine-year-old Sobrino Poco Loco only smiled, but he never laughed. His favorite sketch was "The Adventures of Chucky Margolis" because Chucky and his friend Allen "both act dumb and funny." He also enjoyed the bear, the multiple Supermans, and the little boy (Freddie) who he only eats candy, but thought it was weird when they dressed up like Elvis as The 3 Galoshes.

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There are a few special features. "The Best Sketches of *The Hudson* Brothers Show" should be a kick for TV fans as McLean Stevenson, Ken Berry, Stephanie Edwards, Ronnie Graham, Andy Griffith, and Danny Thomas guest star. However, if these are the best sketches, and there are some good ones with Karl Marx (Griffith) as the fourth Marx Brother and a father frustrated with his sons, The Parker Brothers, always playing games, the worst ones have to be pretty bad. There are also three Chucky Margolis sketches.

Certainly safe to leave a kid in front, but adults may want to rent it rather than buy to see if the series lives up to their memories of it.

Labels: Rod Hull and Emu, Saturday Morning, The Hudson Brothers, variety show

posted by El Bicho @ 2:53 PM



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