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The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show – The Complete Series (VSC/MVD DVD)

Picture: C Sound: C
Extras: C Episodes: B

The TV variety show was so hot by the early 1970s in the wake of several hits and the end of Ed Sullivan's reign that one even became a hit TV show during the peak years of Saturday Morning TV programming for children before that was mistakenly abandoned in the 1980s. Though the success began as a set of prime time TV specials, **The Hudson Brothers Razzle Dazzle Show** was a huge hit in the 1974-75 Season and even gave the trio of brothers two Top 20 hit singles at that time.



The overriding joke that opens and closes each show is that the entire show (cast, crew, instruments, sound equipment, sets, props) are all unleashed and restored in the same delivery truck, as if all that could fit in there. That truck drives around in a silly, crazy way opening and closing each show and is part of the fun attitude that immediately tell the audience that this is about fun and funny, even more than the counterculture attitude that many similar nighttime shows had.

The Hudsons come from Portland, Oregon and are a trio: Bill, Brett and Mark. At the time, Bill was married to Goldie Hawn before a not-so-pleasant break-up and he is also the father of the successful actress Kate Hudson. Bill's connection with Goldie also spoke of **Laugh-In**, which did not hurt this show one bit. Like The Bee Gees, they sang together even playing guitars and like Sonny & Cher (on their show and sometimes on record) would do as many cover songs/remakes as they would do original material. Then there were also skits and the one-liners.

One ongoing in-joke was inspired by CBS (the U.S. Network that carried the show) executive Fred Silverman, who brought the network to new glory. They have a child actor (Scott Fisher) playing a child TV executive named Freddie with jokes about them being fired or downsized or... Well, you get it. As well, Rod Hull & his Emu (a wild puppet act) and "The Bear" (from **The Andy Williams Show**) were other side highlights. You also had the Chucky Margolis skit that seemed to be popular, supporting actors like Peter Cullen, Billy Van, Ted Zeigler, Ronny Graham, Freeman King, Bob Monkhouse, Gary Owen and Murray Langston (some of whom, long with the writers and producers, were also working on **Sonny & Cher**) adding to the lunacy. At a half-hour a show, these were tighter than their nighttime counterparts.

So does the show hold up? Is it any good? It has been over 30 years (!) since I had seen an episode and all I could remember is how fun it was. Now, it is not only still that funny, but some things have not aged very

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well, making it even funnier. Even if you do not like the songs, you can tell everyone was having a riot of a time and that translates very well into each show. The Hudsons had great chemistry here and were even more comically gifted than musically, with their songs being fun pop at best. Oddly, these were produced in Canada.

16 episodes were made altogether and when the show ended, so did their music career, proving the MTV effect had kicked in long before MTV. Too bad, because these could not have been that expensive to produce and would be less costly than the many animated shows that continued production. The show continued to play well in reruns for a while before that ceased and you'd think the commercial success would have at least inspired new specials to be greenlit. It was common practice back then to only do one season of a children's TV show, than play it in reruns over and over. The better ones like this would continue to attract viewers. This DVD set will show once again how much fun these are, leaving many to ask then as now, "why didn't they make more of them?" though they tried to come back in the late 1970s with Bonkers! Hope we see that on DVD next.

The 1.33 X 1 color image was shot on analog NTSC videotape and shows its age, but is even softer as has been the case with every Canadian TV show we have ever seen from any DVD company from the 1970s released to date. These are clean copies as clean and as well transferred as possible, but expect more flaws than you might from an **All In The Family** or **Tony Orlando & Dawn** disc. The Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono also shows its age, but it is simply because TV audio was only so good and in this case, it can be a little more distorted or noisy than usual. However, they play well enough in combination despite their limits and unless some kind of special restoration can be done on them, are about as good as they are going to get here.

Extras include more Chucky Margolis material and nine highlights from the nighttime specials that made the show possible, including guest stars McLean Stevenson, Ken Barry, Andy Griffith, Danny Thomas and some of the regulars that would go onto the series.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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