



Associated-Rediffusion: The UK's First Groundbreaking TV Franchise

Comedy 1: Ronnie Barker and the Pythons

+ intro by season curator Dick Fiddy

Tue 2 Sep 18:15

Drama 1: The Entertaining Mr Orton

Sun 7 Sep 17:25

Comedy 2: The Fred Shows

Fri 12 Sep 18:10

Drama 2: Harold Pinter

Sat 13 Sep 17:30

The Lost World of Children's Programming

+ intro by Elinor Groom, Curator of Television

Tue 16 Sep 18:20

Drama 3:

The Classics at Associated-Rediffusion

Sat 20 Sep 14:15

Object Z + intro by writer Jon Dear

Sun 21 Sep 14:35

Captive Cinema + intro by Lisa Kerrigan,

Senior Curator of Television

Tue 23 Sep 18:20

Ready Steady Go!

Fri 26 Sep 18:00

Missing Believed Wiped:

Associated-Rediffusion Special

Sat 27 Sep 12:15

The Precious Things – Oddities and Rarities

from the BFI National Archive

Sat 27 Sep 15:20

Tackling Racism + intro by Chantelle Lavel Boyea,

BFI Assistant Curator of Television

Fri 3 Oct 18:10

The Associated-Rediffusion collection is preserved in the BFI National Archive

With thanks to Archbuild

With thanks to

BFI colleagues Xavier Pillai, Lisa Kerrigan,

Chantelle Lavel Boyea and Elinor Groom

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Please note that some of the programmes in this season contain racist language, attitudes and other content that reflect the views prevalent in its time, but will likely cause offence today (as they did then). For specific content warnings, please visit bfi.org.uk/whatson

Associated-Rediffusion: The UK's First Groundbreaking TV Franchise

The Lost World of Children's Programming

+ intro by Elinor Groom, Curator of Television

This programme includes *Television for Children*, a featurette made exclusively for the NFT, which follows a version of Lewis Carroll's Alice down the cathode ray tube and into the middle of Associated-Rediffusion's children's department to discover how programmes are made. This is followed by rare examples of early ITV programmes for children, including *Brock and Bruin* and *Our Street*. Finally, we come back to Lewis Carroll with the beguiling, animated retelling of *The Hunting of the Snark*, by the makers of *Captain Pugwash*.

Original Associated-Rediffusion programme notes for 'Television for Children'

Foreword

Seventy minutes a day, from Monday to Friday every week, Associated-Rediffusion puts on programmes specially for children to entertain and interest them during their leisure hours. The majority of these programmes are produced by the company from its studios at Wembley and Television House. In addition a number of contributions are accepted from other Independent Television companies.

The makers of programmes for children have to cater for a range of tastes in their audience – a range far wider than exists among adult viewers. The company appreciated from the beginning that programmes designed to please everybody invariably ended by pleasing nobody. Therefore, part of each day's programmes for children is planned for a particular age group; programmes such as *Small Time* for the under-fives, or series for older children to stimulate interest in outdoor activities and the arts. At the same time, it was felt that each day's Children's Hour should include one or two items to appeal to a wider age-range – general interest programmes dealing with hobbies, light entertainment and topical subjects, such as *Lucky Dip*, to which the young viewers themselves often contribute.

The films dealing with programmes for children which are being shown tonight as part of Children's Week, have been selected to illustrate something of the aims and achievements of Associated-Rediffusion's Children's Section, and the wide variety of the service provided specially for the entertainment of children of all ages and backgrounds.

The programme

The idea behind the making of the film *Television for Children* is to give to those who see it an insight into the work of Associated-Rediffusion's Children's Section.

The aims and ambitions of the company in its attitude to children's programmes are set out in this film and it also forms an introduction to the artists, writers and directors who are responsible for getting these programmes on the air each weekday.

Who better to tell the story of Associated-Rediffusion's children's programmes than Alice ... 'Alice through the Television Set'. Through the screen steps Alice

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– through to a world of cameras, microphones and lights. And the magic of television is seen through a child's eyes as she meets the personalities and characters who have become familiar to her from the other side of the screen.

Excerpts will be shown from *Francis Storm Investigates*, in which Brian Worth stars in a light-hearted series about a private investigator; *The Little Ship*, a six-episode serial set in Shakespeare's London and centred round the Globe Theatre in Southwark; and *Activity*, in which children are shown the rudiments of rock climbing and canoeing.

The second half of the programme is a selection from some of the most popular of Associated-Rediffusion's transmissions for children. These include *Brock and Bruin* from *Small Time* – the daily programme aimed at the very young child – and a complete edition of *Music Parade*, featuring pianist Gerald Moore, Hallé Orchestra violinist Arthur Percival, a team of Indian dancers and musicians, Joe Melia and Redvers Kyle.

Associated-Rediffusion (1960)

ITV's London contractor Rediffusion became the hub of networked children's programming. Programmes for the very young ran under the *Small Time* banner from 1955 to 1966 in the 4.45pm slot. Shows included *The Musical Box* (1958-66), traditional storytelling in *Fireside Story* (1963) and the earliest animations by Oliver Postgate, including *Ivor the Engine* (1959-64). Puppet fox Basil Brush debuted here in *The Three Scampis* (1962-65). Similarly, *Small Time* used the interaction between hosts such as Muriel Young, Whyton and guitarist Bert Weedon and hand puppet pals Pussy Cat Willum, cheeky owl Ollie Beak and woolly dog Fred Barker, all sending birthday greetings to viewers.

Small Time's presenters and puppets crossed over seamlessly to older children's magazine *Tuesday Rendezvous* (1961-63), later begetting the twice-weekly *Five O'Clock Club* (1963-66). Young, Whyton, Howard Williams and Gerry Marsden introduced quizzes, hobby items and post-Beatles pop with performances from Billy Fury, The Spencer Davis Group and The Kinks, among others.

Regional ITV had smaller-scale birthday greetings shows of their own: Westward had hopping rabbit Gus Honeybun and ATV Jean Morton and koala bear chums Tingha and Tucker. Elsewhere, American kindergarten format *Romper Room* had spawned four local UK versions by 1968 – Anglia were first in 1964; Grampian, Ulster and Border followed.

British-made weekday drama was rare, but Rediffusion produced rural melodrama *Badger's Bend* (1963-64), coastal adventure *Smuggler's Cove* (1963) and hi-tech actioner *Sierra Nine* (1963). Spoofy spy thriller *Orlando* (1965-68) became its first real drama 'brand', running for 76 episodes. South-England franchise Southern pushed through with exciting, modern adventure dramas including *The Master* (1966) and *The New Forest Rustlers* (1966) and their reward was to produce Orlando's spy-fi replacement *Freewheelers* (1968-73). Comedy was largely limited to Ollie Beak's cheeky asides until Rediffusion's *Do Not Adjust Your Set* (1967-69) blazed a trail with anarchic pre-Python sketches. Though catch-as-catch-can at times, ITV's service was extremely popular. By the early 60s the share for children's programmes was in some extreme cases 85:15 to ITV.

Alistair McGown, BFI Screenonline