

Kids TV: let them watch foreign crap?

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British TV regulator [Ofcom](#) reports today that children's TV in the UK is booming. There is more programming available for children than ever before thanks to digital channels like [Nickelodeon](#). Unfortunately, Ofcom points out that the vast majority of it is imported cartoons. Production of children's TV in the UK is declining. Those manga-style orgies of violence and fantasy which are taking over the world are not exactly on an educational level with Sesame Street, indeed, they make the Tellytubbies look positively Shakespearian. But what to do?

My colleague [Sonia Livingstone](#) is an expert on children and the media. She tells me that our Prime Minister, the great British patriot Gordon Brown, should campaign for 'British TV for British Kids'. Sonia says that it is pretty clear that, despite trendy post-modernist theories of the media, sci-fi cartoons are not as 'good' for children's development as well-made programmes with real people, variety and stimulating content.

Much less of that good programming is being made by British broadcasters who have all cut back on the production of children's TV. They rely on repeats of the Clangers and foreign imports. Some blame the ban on junk-food commercials that have reduced their revenue from adverts. But children's TV has never made a profit, it relies on a public service subsidy. So over to you again Ofcom.

And does it matter that British children are not consuming British TV? Sonia points out that no-one has ever researched properly whether it does. Instinct tells you that children should consume locally-produced culture (which can still reflect the UK's diversity) but there is no hard evidence.

Youth media matters because it is part of our children's education. It also matters because it forms the habits and media literacy of the public. Anyone concerned about grown-up media should worry about what we put in front of our kids.

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