Full-bodied puppetry and bubblegum pop: US Saturday morning television and *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour*

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ABSTRACT

The creation of full-bodied puppetry series like *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* (1968-1970) on Saturday morning in the United States provides an account of the efforts by production companies, network executives, and advertisers to replace its violent action-adventure programming with comedic fare during the moral panic of 1968. Its production history showcases how the re-introduction of puppetry on Saturday morning was bound up in contemporary cultural discourses involving not only media violence but also industrial strategies shaping children's programming around cross-media marketing, performative labor, and the bubblegum pop phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

For nearly all of the twentieth century, the cel technique was the dominant animation mode for the film and television industries in the United States. Outside of George Pal's stop-motion Puppetoons, this hand-drawn technique was convenient and easily scalable for use by large theatrical studios like Warner Bros. and MGM during the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema (the mid-1920s to late-1950s), followed by its ubiquitous use on television until the emergence of computer animation in the 1990s.

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Although never mainstays of US children's television programming, puppetry and other non-cel animation techniques occasionally broke through on the small screen in the first few decades of television broadcasting. Live hand puppetry like *Howdy Doody* (1947-1960), *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* (1947-1957), and many locally hosted shows; pre-recorded puppetry like *The Bullwinkle Show* (1961-1962); and stop-motion puppetry like *The New Adventures of Pinocchio* (1960-1961) populated the airwaves from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Stop-motion claymation like Art Clokey's *The Gumby Show* (1956-1968) and *Davey and Goliath* (1961-1964), as well as Syncro-Vox like Cambria's *Clutch Cargo* (1959-1960) and *Space Angel* (1962-1964) were also present during this time.[1] By 1965, cel-based cartoons once again saturated the market with the emergence of Saturday morning as the primary zone of new animated programming on US commercial television. For the next few years, almost all original children's programming produced for this time slot was cheap, limited-cel animation of the violent action-adventure variety that capitalized on the spy (*Secret Squirrel*, 1965-1967), outer space (*Space Ghost*, 1966-1968), and superhero (*The Adventures of Batman*, 1968-1969) crazes.

However, for a brief period from the late 1960s to mid-1970s, Saturday morning did feature puppetry – specifically, humans wearing full-bodied costumes produced mainly by the Sid and Marty Krofft factory – before returning almost exclusively to cel-based animation for the remainder of the decade. What accounts for this short resurrection of puppet animation? I believe that the era's renewed interest in puppetry resulted from efforts by production companies, network executives, and advertisers to replace its action-adventure programming amidst increasing criticism over media violence from watchdog groups followed by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and the appointment of a National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence from the Johnson Administration in June 1968. In its wake, a softer, gentler, and funnier Saturday morning emerged. Gone were perilous and terrifying fantasy stories, and in their places were new musical-comedies, mystery-comedies, and adventure-comedies. Most were cel-based cartoons like *Scooby-Doo, Where are You!* (1969-1971) but some featured full-bodied puppets. The animation/live-action hybrid *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* (1968-1970) – which Hanna-Barbera produced with Sid and Marty Krofft-designed costumes – served as a transitional series between the action-adventure and comedy formats. I posit that the *Banana Splits*'s production history showcases how the re-introduction of puppetry on Saturday morning was bound up in contemporary cultural discourses involving not only media violence but also industrial strategies shaping children's programming around cross-media marketing, performative labor, and the bubblegum pop phenomenon.

[1] Syncro-Vox was a process that superimposed a human actor's lips voicing scripted dialogue over an animated figure.

2. Saturday morning and the action-adventure cartoon

By the end of the 1960s in the United States, Saturday morning television had become the principal home of newly produced and previously aired animation series as well as older, fully animated theatrical cartoons from the Hollywood studio era. Nearly all were cel-based animations aimed at the children's audience, establishing a kids-only generic category, states Jason Mittell (2004:77), known as "Saturday Morning Cartoons." He argues that several cultural assumptions linked to the cartoon genre fueled this industrial shift: that kids will gladly watch recycled and repeated programs, that kids cannot discern animation quality, that cartoons should not address "adult" subject matter, and that cartoons are "harmless entertainment."

The massive popularity in the fall of 1965 of King Features' *The Beatles* (ABC, 1965-1968) validated these assumptions and convinced the industry of the lucrativeness of the daypart for advertisers. The series, consisting of short, silly, animated adventures and sing-a-longs that visually illustrated the Fab Four's catalog of songs, was outsourced to five production studios across four countries (England, Australia, Canada, and Holland). It was produced for only $32,000 per half-hour in just four months' production time to capitalize on Beatlemania. With the hasty roll-out to meet the September 1965 airdate, the twenty-six first-season episodes of *The Beatles* had little artistic uniformity and numerous continuity mistakes (Axelrod 1999:65).[2] Similar cost-cutting decisions, whether the product of network indifference or studio negligence, would soon affect most Saturday morning cartoons. This seeming lack of attention certainly contributed to the sense by parents and advocates that children's programming was not getting the consideration it deserved.

In the wake of *The Beatles*' cartoon success, the 1966-67 season was a turning point in Saturday morning programming, as CBS, NBC, and ABC each launched ten new original series.[3] Except for the short-lived *Beatles* ripoff, *The Beagles* (1966-1967), the three networks deluged the timeslot with nine action-adventure series that capitalized on the James Bond craze, the space race, and the burgeoning fascination with superheroes. Of greatest significance that season was the establishment of an immensely successful three-hour block of action-adventure programming by CBS's new, twenty-seven-year-old director of daytime programming, Fred Silverman. He designed a block of action-adventure programming around his most successful character, the superhero Mighty Mouse, by acquiring the rights to Total Television's Underdog away from NBC. Silverman then produced a horde of new superhero cartoons that included Terrytoons'

[2] According to Al Brodax, the $32,000 did not include any fee for music rights, which were freely contributed by The Beatles and their agent Brian Epstein. See Al Brodax (2004:27).

[3] CBS also premiered *The Road Runner Show*; however, it was an anthology series compiled of old Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies shorts produced by Warner Bros. and Depatie-Freleng.

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The Mighty Heroes (1966-1967), *Hanna-Barbera's Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles* (1966-1968) and *Space Ghost and Dino Boy* (1966-1968), Filmation's *The New Adventures of Superman* (1966-67, 1969-1970), and Format Films's *The Lone Ranger* (1966-1968). With major promotion in comic books – unprecedented at that time for Saturday morning – Silverman's gamble paid off with very high ratings. CBS catapulted from third to first place, with *Superman* earning a 60 audience share and *Space Ghost* posting a 55 percent share in the 10:30 am slot, besting *The Beatles* (Silverman in Barbera 2006:167).

Hanna-Barbera, who would produce the largest number of Saturday morning cartoons for the next two decades, supplied six of the ten new action-adventure cartoons blanketing the three broadcast networks in the 1967-68 Saturday morning season.[4] All of these series were superhero cartoons featuring the illustrative realism work of Alex Toth and all contained large doses of fantasy violence: *The Herculoids* (CBS, 1967-1969), *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio* (NBC, 1967-1968), *Moby Dick and Mighty Mightor* (CBS, 1967-1969), *Shazaan* (CBS, 1967-69), *Samson & Goliath/Young Samson* (NBC, 1967-1968) and *Fantastic Four* (ABC, 1967-1969) along with reruns of *Space Ghost and Dino Boy and Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles*. As it turned out, the *New York Times*'s Sam Blum discovered a year later, all three networks "had instructed its cartoon suppliers to turn out more of the same – in fact, to go 'stronger' – on the theory, which proved correct, that the more horror, the higher the Saturday morning ratings." Joe Barbera referred to this boldness as "out-of-this-world hard action" that the networks wanted for this new crop of action-adventure series (Blum 1968:32). "Not out of choice, you understand," he stipulated about Hanna-Barbera's lineup. "It's the only thing we can sell to the networks, and we have to stay in business" (Brown 1971:248).

Barbera's remarks about the predominance of action-adventure on Saturday morning at this time highlighted the immense authority now held by the broadcast networks in dictating the content of Saturday morning television. As Joseph Turow (1981) demonstrated in his study of the first three decades of network children's programming, *Entertainment, Education, and the Hard Sell*, the fading influence of government bodies and public pressure groups on children's programming in the mid-1960s enabled the networks to "rather uncompromisingly" serve their own commercial needs and those of their advertisers (Turow 1981:82). Two sets of hearings by the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency on crime and violence on television in 1961-1962 and 1964 had not led to any noticeable reduction in violent programming by the three broadcast networks. Additionally, the shift from sole sponsorship to magazine format (or participation) advertising gave the networks great, if not total, control over idea generation, script and storyboard oversight, and budgets (Turow 1981:53-55).

[4] The only new animated comedy – out of only four airing on the three networks from 9 am to noon that season – was Jay Ward's *George of the Jungle* (ABC, 1967-69). The other series were reruns of *The Flintstones, The Casper Cartoon Show*, and *The Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel Show.*

Left relatively unencumbered to pursue profit-maximizing ways, the networks were largely responsible for shaping Saturday morning into a relatively homogenous block of action-adventure programming. In the run-up to what would turn out to be a tumultuous 1968-69 season, networks once again prepared for programming, as Louise Sweeney (1968) wrote, which provided "free sadism, deformity, and violence available to any child who can turn a TV dial on Saturday morning."

3. Puppetry and The Banana Splits

Enter the 1967-1968 Saturday morning season, where cartoony human and animal hijinks had been replaced by technological stories of fantasy and science fiction predominantly featuring realistically drawn human characters placed in perilous, violent situations. Out of this context rose the Hanna-Barbera series, *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour*, and the re-emergence of puppetry on US children's television. The series began in late 1967 and early 1968 when the Leo Burnett advertising agency convinced their client Kellogg's to sponsor an entire hour of Saturday morning programming for the following season. Kellogg's had previously sponsored the first three half-hour Hanna-Barbera series in syndication – *The Huckleberry Hound Show* (1958-1961), *The Quick Draw McGraw Show* (1959-1961), and *The Yogi Bear Show* (1961-1962) – which plugged Kellogg's cereals during the commercials breaks as well as the opening and closing animated credits. Hanna-Barbera first became aware of this opportunity, recalled lead character-designer Iwao Takamoto, after Joe Barbera sent him to New York at the behest of CBS's Fred Silverman to meet with a "couple of idea men" (likely from the network) to sketch out some idea about "a one-hour show set in an amusement park." Silverman then pitched the idea back to Barbera, hoping that he would produce the series. However, as Takamoto (2009:116) notes, Barbera had a better idea: "put real performers into cartoonish-looking costumes." Barbera himself recounts the story a bit differently. In his version, he is at lunch with his agent, Sy Fisher, brainstorming ideas for Leo Burnett executive Lee Rich that would not be the run-of-the-mill cartoon. And it hits him. "Why don't we take the same characters that we ordinarily animate and do them live instead? We could design the characters, make the costumes, and put real people inside the costumes" (Barbera 2006:54).

From that point forward, the accounts from Barbera, Takamoto, and Hanna-Barbera character designer Jerry Eisenberg largely converge. Whether discussions lasted a few weeks or a few months is unclear, but Barbera struggled to convey the concept to the cereal maker and the networks of costumed human hosts performing comedy skits and musical numbers that served as wraparounds for several live-action and animated series. Ultimately, Eisenberg sealed the deal. Arriving by air in Chicago only six hours before company executives from Kellogg's and the now-attached NBC network

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heard the final pitch at the offices of Leo Burnett, Eisenberg waited in a bathroom stall. Then, as Barbera presented the series artwork, Eisenberg crashed the session dressed in a Yogi Bear costume and proceeded to perform, among other things, a soft shoe routine with Barbera. Their performance was intended to capture the essence of the then-called "Banana Bunch," and it worked. "It was almost like a light bulb would go over everybody's head, and they got it," Eisenberg said.[5]

NBC announced the still-untitled Kellogg's project as part of its fall lineup on March 21, 1968, helping to establish a rough timeline of the show's development as well as promoting the aforementioned accounts that full-bodied puppetry was a simple counterprogramming move on the part of Hanna-Barbera and NBC. In their praise of this "new concept" for "broadening areas in children's programming" and providing "something different and special," NBC executives intentionally glossed over these program changes as a response to the mounting criticism of excessive violence in children's programming by parents and educators (quoted in Laurent 1968a). Major newspapers like *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Broadcasting* did not, embedding in their reports that news of changes by all three broadcast networks came on the heels of two key announcements sparked by the massive oversaturation of the "supers" and other action-adventure cartoons on Saturday morning (see Laurent 1968b; Gent 1968:95; "Children's Hour Bought by Kellogg" 1968:39). First, the media watchdog group, the National Association for Better Broadcasting (NABB), declared children's television that year to be the "worst in the history of TV." With "a mass of indiscriminate entertainment," the NABB charged the broadcast industry with "gross negligence toward child welfare," airing "dozens" of children's programs that "use horror for its own sake, [that] are saturated with violence, and are deliberately designed to alarm child audiences" (Longstreet and Orme 1968:1). The absence, to say the least, of educational programming on the commercial broadcast networks, led to the second, more noteworthy announcement. The Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation, together with other private foundations and government agencies, awarded $8 million in funding to the Children's Television Workshop to develop fare for preschoolers on public broadcasting stations (Hellman 1987:50). Over the next two years, a team of educational advisors, professional researchers, and experienced television producers would develop what became *Sesame Street* (1969-present). The series would provide an alternative to the "wasteland" of options in children's programming, as co-creator Joan Ganz Cooney, echoing Newton Minow, called it, by emphasizing the opposite of the majority of Saturday morning: pro-socialness, diversity, and the elimination of violence

[5] "Jerry Eisenberg, Part Five, Bobe, Spence, and Lew's Deal," Yowp.com, March 16, 2011. https://yowpyowp.blogspot.com/2011/03/jerry-eisenberg-part-five-bobe-spence.html. As it turned out, Barbera still had to pitch the concept one more time, sans Yogi, at a Kellogg's corporate meeting a short time later. See Barbera (2006: 156-57).

from conflict resolution (Cooney in Lesser 1975: xv-xxvii). "Aquaman vs. the Alphabet" stated the headline for Jack Gould's piece in the *New York Times* (Gould 1968:D29).

It is not an overreach to assume that the same contemporary cultural discourses on children's television, mainly concerns over media violence, led to the incorporation of full-bodied puppetry in *Sesame Street* and the "Banana Bunch." Sid and Marty Krofft transformed Takamoto's preliminary drawings into three-dimensional, full-bodied costumes. The Kroffts managed a puppet, marionette, and costume workshop in California's San Fernando Valley. "The Factory," as the workshop was known, supplied expensive costumes and related props to high-profile customers, including Six Flags and *The Dean Martin Show* (1965-1974) and would be responsible for costuming corporate mascots like the Sambo's Restaurant Tiger and the Kool-Aid Smiling Pitcher (Erickson 1998:14). For Kellogg's, the sponsorship of the hour for an estimated $5 million or $135,000 per episode – reportedly the most ever for a daytime hour show – served a dual function: puppetry was part of a creative solution to wield influence once more over program content and as a public relations move to improve their image. According to Barbera, the cereal company felt a heavy investment was necessary to salvage their reputation, somewhat tarnished by their myriad ad placements in the superhero cartoons (quoted in Beigel 1968:50; see also Gent 1968:95). NBC was also willing to take a big financial gamble on alternative forms like puppetry given the network then languished in last place after failing miserably with their own action-adventure series like *Super President and Spy Shadow* (1967-1968) and *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio* (1967-1968).

On September 7, 1968, *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* premiered. A Banana Splits Club meeting opened each show with the four costumed animal characters – Fleegle, Bingo, Drooper, and Snorky – performing slapstick routines in red marching band hats on a physical set. The Banana Splits also appeared on location at Six Flags Over Texas amusement park, driving in their "Banana Buggies" for a series of zany wraparounds for the other segments in the hour. In stark contrast, however, these "adventure" segments – the animated *Arabian Knights, Micro Ventures, The Three Musketeers,* and live-action *Danger Island* – were largely semi-serious, action-packed dramas with moments of peril punctuated by disquieting sound effects and underscore. As the title *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* makes clear, Kellogg's, NBC, and Hanna-Barbera, despite their investment in full-bodied puppets, were unwilling to abandon the still-popular action-adventure genre on Saturday morning completely. Nor did they have to. Production on the series had already begun in March 1968, right before the continuous television coverage of the Vietnam War, student protests, riots, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert. F. Kennedy, Jr. catalyzed the government to force broadcast networks to develop new, non-violent cartoon formats that summer. Yet, the literary pedigree of two of these properties, the removal of superheroes from their mix, and the insertion of slapstick comedy into the action

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sequences suggest Kellogg's, NBC, and Hanna-Barbera, to some degree, scrutinized representations of violence for all the segments in *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour.* Despite these adventure dramas, The Banana Splits remained the stars of the show, manufactured not only to be television hosts but also bubblegum pop sensations that hopefully would sell millions of records.

4. Puppetry and bubblegum pop

The convergence of bubblegum pop music and Saturday morning cartoons may seem peculiar, but it was not an accidental pairing. Produced roughly between 1967 and 1973, bubblegum pop music, according to music journalist Carl Cafarelli, was characterized by "sing-a-long choruses, seemingly childlike themes, and a contrived but beguiling innocence, occasionally combined with an undercurrent of sexual double entendre" (Cafarelli 2001:13). Legendary rock critic Lester Bangs described the basic bubblegum pop sound another way: "rock n'roll – minus the rage, fear, violence, and anomie that runs from Johnny Burnette to Sid Vicious" (Bangs quoted in Smay 2001:43). As upbeat pop music manufactured and marketed to appeal to pre-teens and teenagers, state Kim Cooper and David Smay in *Bubblegum Music is the Naked Truth*, the bubblegum sound was blatantly commercial, produced in an assembly-line process by record producers using contracted songwriters, faceless singers, and studio musicians occasionally fronting a television presence (Cooper and Smay 2001:1).

The inclusion of full-bodied puppetry in *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* can be directly connected to the massive cross-media popularity of The Monkees with children and teens and the band's subsequent embattlements with management. While not technically bubblegum, The Monkees – Davy Jones, Micky Dolenz, Peter Tork, and Michael Nesmith – were no less a manufactured music group than Ohio Express ("Yummy, Yummy, Yummy") or The 1910 Fruitgum Company ("Simon Says"). Plus, they had the added advantage of a weekly television series (NBC, 1966-1968) in which they played a fictional rock band struggling to make it big. Don Kirshner served as The Monkees's musical supervisor and the primary creative force in organizing the band into a marketable product by contracting songwriters, hiring studio musicians, and supervising the band's vocal tracks. Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart wrote, produced, and recorded many of the songs from the group's self-titled debut album with their backing band, the Candy Store Prophets, during the summer of 1966. The Monkees themselves were largely relegated to a vocals-only role at this time as the band spent the first several months of their existence essentially filming their television series that debuted later that fall. Despite a successful series and three hit singles – "Last Train to Clarksville" from the first album, "I'm a Believer," and "(I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone" from their follow-up, *More of the Monkees* – the band,

particularly Nesmith and Tork, rebelled against management. Their demands to play their own instruments on their records, to record more of their own material, and to receive a larger share of the royalties – each Monkee received 1.5% of each recording while Kirshner got 15% – led to Kirshner's firing in early 1967 (Lipsitz 2007:23). The Monkees continued to record music until 1971, and their television series would begin reruns on CBS Saturday morning starting in fall 1969.

The networks quickly became hip to the fact that pre-packaged groups like The Monkees could earn a lot of money in both music *and* television, particularly on Saturday mornings. CBS pursued a cel-animated series inspired by The Monkees called *The Archie Show* for the fall of 1968. Fred Silverman hired the recently-fired Kirshner to musically supervise The Archies, a live-action bubblegum rock group with songs composed by Jeff Barry and Andy Kim with Ron Dante singing lead. Filmation produced *The Archie Show* (1968-70), a cartoon featuring the fictional antics of the teenage comic book gang (Archie, Jughead, Reggie, Betty, and Veronica) who sang these Barry-Kim songs as a band called The Archies. The concept was a smash hit, as The Archies's third single, "Sugar, Sugar," from their second album, became the biggest-selling single for all of 1969 in the United States and the United Kingdom (Smay 2001:42).[6]

NBC, on the other hand, jumped on the bubblegum pop bandwagon with puppetry. The series format was loosely inspired by NBC's recently launched variety show, *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* (1968-73), while Kellogg's was a major sponsor of *The Monkees* television series, which aired in the Monday time slot right before *Laugh-In*. The Banana Splits rock band was essentially The Monkees in puppet form: Fleegle (Davey) the beagle guitarist, Bingo (Micky) the gorilla drummer, Drooper (Mike) the lion guitarist, and Snorky (Peter) the elephant organist. Their Monkees-like musical romps were featured on three releases: two EPs originally sold as cereal premiums from Kellogg's and the Decca LP *We're the Banana Splits* (1968, DL 57075).[7] Musically directed by Aaron Schroeder and produced by David Mook, the Banana Splits songs featured a disparate collection of established journeyman musicians and studio singers, who, unlike The Archies, did not provide a unified sound. For example, Barry White wrote and sang the rhythm and blues dance number "Doin' the Banana Split," and Gene Pitney co-composed the ragtime number "Two Ton Tessie." Most of the songs, though, were bubblegum by session players like Joey Levine of "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy" fame and Mark Barkan and Ritchie Adams, who also co-wrote songs for The Archies (Porter 2001:207-210; Ehrbar 2015).

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[6] Jeff Barry was formerly a member of the songwriting-credit Barry-Greenwich ("Be My Baby," "Da Doo Ron Ron," "Leader of the Pack").

[7] The EPs were titled *Kellogg's Presents The Banana Splits Sing'n Play The Tra-La-La Song (One Banana, Two Banana)* (Hanna-Barbera Premium Division, #34578, 1969) and *Kellogg's Presents The Banana Splits Sing'n Play Doin' the Banana Split* (Hanna-Barbera Premium Division, #34579, 1969).

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This seamless convergence of bubblegum pop with cel animation and puppetry on Saturday morning also provided a solution for music executives to problems posed by potentially uncontrollable performers like The Monkees. By having Filmation and Hanna-Barbara create animated musicians, like those in *The Archies* and *The Banana Splits*, in place of hiring flesh-and-blood ones, Kirshner and Schroeder could enhance managerial control, reduce employee agency, and consolidate control of intellectual property rights in their respective fields (Stahl 2011:3-22). As Kirshner recalled about the formation of *The Archies*: "If I could give Archie, Jughead, and Veronica voices, I can wind up with a group that don't talk back, I don't have to take any nonsense, I will control whatever I put out, and do it my way."[8] The ensuing employment of what Matt Stahl terms "virtual labor"– performative labor that *appears* to be performed by an individual but that is actually the result of a division of labor incorporating creative and technical workers, intellectual property, and high-tech equipment – was possible between the two production systems because they already shared a similar division of creative labor to achieve managerial efficiency, stability, and predictability (Stahl 2011:4). The 'separation' of the organizational work of the music supervisor from the "execution" of artistic work of writers, arrangers, musicians, and engineers mirrored that between animation producer and the writers, story artists, animators, inbetweeners, ink and paint, camera, and other below-the-line laborers (Stahl 2011:9, 13). Both modes of production minimized the extent of bargaining power, remuneration, autonomy, and other forms of artistic agency by the human musicians of The Archies and The Banana Splits, who might have thwarted the ultimate objectives of these music impresarios and animation companies: making a financial killing with hit records and hit cartoons.

As it turned out, The Banana Splits pop band was not nearly as popular as The Banana Splits characters themselves. Only the series theme song, "The Tra La La Song (One Banana, Two Banana)," peaked at #96 on the Billboard Hot 100, negating the plan for several costumed touring companies to perform their music across the country (Evanier quoted in Cafarelli 2001:19). *Kellogg's Presents The Banana Splits Adventure Hour* also lasted just one additional season on NBC. As was customary for two-year contracts on Saturday morning, NBC aired each episode several times. Still, two changes were implemented for the second season: reruns of *The Hillbilly Bears* from *The Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel Show* (NBC, 1965-1968) replaced *The Three Musketeers*, and new live-action segments of the Banana Splits were filmed at Coney Island amusement park in Cincinnati, Ohio. The latter modification for the series was telling as Taft Broadcasting, the Cincinnati-based media conglomerate that purchased Hanna-Barbera in 1966 and then Coney Island in 1969, viewed its animated characters as synergistic opportunities to be exploited across

[8] This comes from the Modern Pop episode of *Popular Song: Soundtrack of the Century* that aired on the Ovation Network. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH0cBuOIkL4

parallel entertainment industries such as television, film, music, and theme parks. *The Banana Splits*, along with *Fred Flintstone*, *Yogi Bear*, and *Scooby-Doo*, were a centerpiece of Taft's efforts, particularly with Kings Island, their $30 million amusement park that opened in May 1972 just north of Cincinnati. Hanna-Barbera even filmed the live-action sequences of *The Banana Splits* at Kings Island for the ABC Saturday Superstar Movie *The Banana Splits in Hocus Pocus Park* (1972), where they also appeared, for the first and only time, as cel-animated characters. So, although not a bubblegum musical sensation, the full-bodied puppets of *The Banana Splits* would remain a fixture for Hanna-Barbera merchandising and marketing in the next decade and have a lengthy life in off-network syndication under the name *The Banana Splits and Friends Show* (1971-1982), albeit in a shortened half-hour form and without the sponsorship of Kellogg's.

5. Conclusion

The story of *Kellogg's Presents the Banana Splits Adventure Hour* and the integration of full-bodied puppetry into the Saturday morning schedule in the late 1960s showcases how contemporary cultural discourses translate into actual practices that mold the way that stories get imagined and created by television executives, advertisers, and artists. *The Banana Splits* were an anomaly in the Saturday morning lineup for a 1968-1969 season still saturated by action-adventure cartoons; that would not be the case the following year. The assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and the appointment of a National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in June 1968 led to several editorials and reports in major newspapers and magazines, which crystallized for authorities, reformers, and public opinion-makers several ongoing anxieties about the relationship between violent television and real-world violence, particularly Saturday morning's corruptive influence on child audiences. This moral panic would ultimately have its desired effect for the 1969-1970 season: no more action-adventure cartoons on Saturday mornings.

To replenish a schedule once inundated with cel-based action-adventure cartoons, the networks, cartoon producers, and advertisers turned elsewhere for new types of programming that offered less hard action in the form of fantasy and comedy. In no small order, they turned to the cross-promotional possibilities with bubblegum pop and Saturday Morning for their inspiration, drawing from the success of *The Archies* and *The Banana Splits* together with the wide popularity of *The Monkees* and later *The Partridge Family* with children and teens. In the first half of the 1970s, the networks infused their newly created animated and live-action series with a confectionary concoction of music in a variety of formats (mystery, comedy, variety, fantasy, adventure) and styles (psychedelic, glam, soul, rock, pop). The Fall 1970 Saturday morning lineup alone featured twelve series, some involving the presence of a music band, but all of which spawned their own soundtrack albums. They included the cel-animated *Sabrina and the Groovie*

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Goolies (1970-1971), *Harlem Globetrotters* (1970-1972), *Archie's Funhouse* (1970-1971), *The Hardy Boys* (1969-1971), *The Further Adventures of Dr. Dolittle* (1970-1971), and *Josie and the Pussycats* (1970-1971). Along with reruns of *The Monkees*, the live-action entries were *Lancelot Link, Secret Chimp* (1970-1971), *Here Comes the Double Deckers!* (1970-1971) as well as *H. R. Pufnstuf* (1969-1971) and *The Bugaloos* (1970-1971), produced by Sid and Marty Krofft, the team behind the full-bodied costumes of *The Banana Splits*.

Most likely, puppetry would not exist on Saturday morning in the 1970s without NBC offering Sid and Marty Krofft their own series after watching them design the costumes for The Banana Splits (Sid and Marty Krofft, Archive of American Television).[9] That series became *H. R. Pufnstuf* and exhibited the characteristics of what biographer David Martindale called the "Krofft Look": "programs that blended flesh-and-blood actors with life-size puppets, catchy musical numbers and psychedelic color schemes resulting in a unique brand of eye and ear candy never before presented in the form of children's television" (Martindale 1998:1-2). Actors within the full-bodied costumes, such as Robert Gamonet (H. R. Pufnstuf), Joyce Campbell (Orson Vulture and Cling), and Sharon Baird (Judy the Frog, Shirley Pufnstuf, and Lady Boyd), were billed as the "Krofft Puppeteers;" they were required to manipulate the characters' mouth and limb movements themselves, with Gamonet occasionally needing offscreen puppeteers and strings for more dynamic gestures and motions (Erickson 1998:20, 27). Executive Producer Si Rose recalled that "Robert used to have to use one of his arms inside to work the mouth, so Pufnstuf would always have one arm swinging, like a dead arm. Then, finally, they worked out a way to control the mouth so he could use both arms" (Martindale 1998:82). The Krofft Look also utilized puppetry as "living props" in their fantasy lands. In H. R. Pufnstuf, the pocket-sized Freddy Flute was both a stationary prop and an actual puppet operated by a lever mechanism, as were Bluebell the Sunflower and the Grapevine for their follow-up series, *The Bugaloos*. Sid and Marty Krofft would continue to employ these aesthetics in other Kellogg's sponsored series like Lidsville (1971-1973) and *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters* (1973-1975).

Other companies were not as successful with puppetry as Sid and Marty Krofft. *Curiosity Shop* (NBC, 1973), a commercial answer to *Sesame Street* created by Chuck Jones with puppets from Bob Baker, and *The Skatebirds* (1977-1978), Hanna-Barbera's attempt to duplicate the format of *The Banana Splits Adventure Hour* aired only a season. However, by the decade's end, puppetry had largely disappeared from Saturday morning. The efficiencies in runaway production for cel animation and the increased commercialization and deregulation of children's programming in the United States made puppetry both uneconomical and undesirable for 1980s television producers and child audiences.

[9] Sid and Marty Krofft interview, Archive of American Television. https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/interviews/sid-krofft

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