

TV COMPILATION REVIEW

FATHER KNOWS BEST: SEASON ONE

By Tim Muncher

I'm back, and so is FATHER KNOWS BEST, one of the most popular '50s sitcoms. And all I can say is that of the two of us, guess which is in better shape.

You got it. Yours truly. And I suck.

What I'm saying is that I'm way too young to have seen this show when it hit the airwaves in 1954, thirty years before I was born. And if the goings on in the legendary Anderson family relate even remotely to that era's reality, now I know why my parents are so screwed.

The basic structure of every one of the half dozen episodes I watched (out of the 26 included in the set) is this:

Robert Young, as patriarch Jim Anderson, comes home from work, puts on his special jacket, and sits in his special living room chair.

There, he holds court like the Godfather, with his wife, Jane Wyatt (who starred in one of my favorite old films, LOST HORIZON), and their three ass-brained children, Elinor Donahue, Billy Gray, and Lauren Chapin, metaphorically kissing his ring and plopping all their personal freedom in his flaccid suburban lap.

Hilarity, of course, ensues.

Except that nothing that happens in the show is as funny as the treacly/cutesy/inane background music, nor as energetic as the laugh track that gives new, deep meaning to the word, "inappropriate."

The fact that this series was such a huge hit utterly mystifies *moi*. Was it because it reflected the life of the audience? Because it presented the life the audience wanted? I mean, what the fuck?

I'm probably too young to ever figure it out. No one in their right mind could ever live, or want to live, the Pod People existence FATHER KNOWS BEST portrays. Not unless they were stoned out of their heads. (Did the son have a meth lab in the basement? I hope so!)

Oh, almost forgot. A word about the extras on this DVD. Extras like:

Interviews with the surviving series regulars. Two old bats who played kids on the show and idolized Robert Young so much that it gives a whole new meaning to that smile he flashed on camera every time he looked their way.

Robert Young's home movies. His grandson namedrops and tells us all about grandpop's grandiose homes. With footage popping up randomly, with no regard whatsoever for chronology.

Behind the scenes color footage from the set. Of significance, even the DVD admits, only because the show was shot in black and white, so seeing things in color is like, "Wow."

A special propaganda episode paid for by the U.S. government. In which Big Daddy shows his true colors and treats his family like, well, like our government currently is treating us. Actually, I liked this bit because it's genuinely prophetic.

The pilot for Mr. Young's next series. So boring that I didn't get past the first scene. My DVD player just plain vomited the disk right out.

TV Writer.Com's fearless leader, LB, has asked me to be nice this time, so I won't even comment on the subpar technical credits in the DVD itself, such as heaving sound levels. But I don't have to, do I? You get the point.

My take boils down to this: If you're a person of a certain age, someone who actually enjoyed this show (Please! If you are, write and tell me why!), seeing the old eps will be a big kick. But otherwise, unless you're the most indiscriminate fan in the history of broadcast media, *stay away*.