

My top 5 american kids TV cartoon series of the past two decades that you may not have heard of

Okay, that's a long title. Here's why.

- First, I wanted to keep it to five just to make it exclusive. I've spent nearly the last thirty years raising kids, and find myself occasionally referencing shows that other folks (non-parents maybe) don't know.
- Second, I don't watch international tv, so who knows what great series might be on, say, Australian tv? I mean, they gave us [Bananas in Pyjamas](#), right?
- Third, I focus on tv series because I'm not familiar with all the web series' out there, though there are some cool ones ([Happy Tree Friends](#), [Blah Girls](#)).
- Fourth, I limited it to the past two decades so that I wouldn't have to do all the obvious "what about the Flintstones/Jetsons/Road Runner" questions.

So this is about series that I think were under appreciated, uniquely creative and smart. They're series I think you should see if you've missed them.

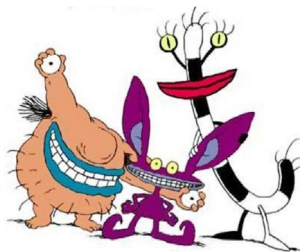
In no particular order...



Invader Zim: Official Site – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Nickelodeon

Zim was a great series, cut short in its second season. Zim is an incompetent alien sent to Earth to do reconnaissance for an impending invasion, aided by his dim witted robot dog GIR. He lives in a house with robot parents, attends elementary school, and is under investigation by Dib, a boy obsessed with the paranormal who can't get anyone to listen to him. Classic elements, smartly presented, great character design. I still fondly remember the "fantastic voyage" episode...



Aaah! Real Monsters: Official Site – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Nickelodeon

Real Monsters ran four seasons, telling the story of three kid monsters who attend monster school under the city dump, where they learn how to scare humans. Sweet and funny and smart, the show didn't last long enough and isn't getting the long term love from Nickelodeon that it deserves. I had a stuffed Ickis toy from some fast food restaurant. Wish I still had it.

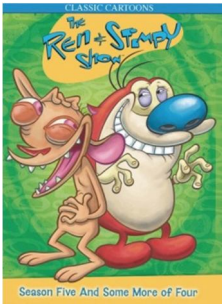


Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends: [Official Site](#) – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Cartoon Network

Foster's is a recent series, and probably the most well known on the list. The premise is that kids manifest imaginary friends through their imagination, but when they outgrow them, the friends are simply abandoned. Mrs. Foster has set up her halfway house, where imaginary friends can stay until they're matched with a new kid who needs them. Friggin' brilliant premise, wonderful character design, from the creator of Power Puff

Girls.



The Ren and Stimpy Show: [Official Site](#) – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Nickelodeon

Yeah, you probably know this one, but it had to make the list. This twisted show set the tone for all the modern violent, inappropriate, fart obsessed kids cartoons to follow. I don't think in today's climate it would be seen as so controversial, but I still love it for its absurd surrealism and smart but childish tone.

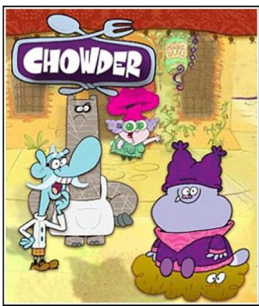


Rocko's Modern Life: [Official Site](#) – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Nickelodeon

Rocko was a huge favorite in our house, clearly a precursor to Spongebob in style and structure. A lovable protagonist, his faithful pet, his dimwitted big boned friend, his irritating boss and his unfortunate neighbor. Many of the folks who went on to bring us Spongebob met while working on Rocko.

If I could make it 7 ... oh wait, I can. It's my blog.



Chowder: [Official Site](#) – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Cartoon Network

Chowder is a ... cat? ... and an apprentice to a chef named Mung Daal, who owns a catering company serving the fictional Marzipan City. The show combines traditional animation with stop-motion and puppetry, and has a wild throwback style that looks like a paisley shirt threw up on the Yellow Submarine. Visually arresting, narratively wacky and entertaining, Chowder is a wildly creative alternative to magical animals that can be forced to fight one another by kids with trading cards. This is the creation of a former storyboard artist on the

show that just keeps on giving, Spongebob... surprised?



The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack: [Official Site](#) – [IMDB](#) – [Wikipedia](#)

Cartoon Network

Ohmigod... Flapjack may be creeping into first place for me. The surreal design style of the show, both charming and icky at the same time (blood flies, anyone?), combined with a terrifically satisfying fictional universe that runs on candy, responsibility and a thirst for adventure, all revolving around a sweet little cabin boy who only wants to be

the best friend he can possibly be to everyone he meets... does it get any better? It feeds your ick and your goodness at the same time. Like Chowder, the show includes some stop motion and puppetry. Absolutely brilliant and must see.

There's others... they've been more successful, and had bigger influences, and you've heard of them.

- King of the Hill (almost not a cartoon, you don't watch this one for good drawing or animation. It's simply a great sitcom and could work just as well live action)
- Spongebob Squarepants
- The Simpsons
- Futurama
- South Park
- The Tick
- Power Puff Girls
- etc...

I'm sure others have their opinions, and I bet I forgot a couple. Feel free to set me straight.