

grass. Lester Raymond Flatt was born in Overton County, TN, in 1914; Earl Eugene Scruggs in Cleveland County, NC, in 1924. As boys, both were interested in performing music. When his time was not taken with school and chores, Flatt taught himself to play the guitar, and during the 1930s, he played for local groups. Scruggs began playing the banjo at the age of five and had invented his own style of picking, known as the three-finger approach, and a device used for making rapid tuning changes by the age of ten. Both men gained notoriety for their musicianship and in 1944 began playing with the "father of bluegrass," Bill Monroe, on the *Grand Ole Opry* stage. Flatt and Scruggs played with Monroe until 1948, when the two decided to form their own bluegrass band, the Foggy Mountain Boys.

Within only a few years, the new band had signed a recording contract and was featured on many radio stations in the American Southeast and some television shows, such as *Farm and Fun Time*. By 1953, the bluegrass players earned their own spot at the *Grand Ole Opry*. In the mid-1960s, Flatt and Scruggs continued to broaden their audience by landing their own syndicated television show as well as continuing to play folk, country-western, and bluegrass music festivals. Their rendition of the theme song for the hit comedy *The Beverly Hillbillies*, as well as occasional appearances on the show, allowed an even broader audience to appreciate the bluegrass performers' work. A version of the duo's "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" was featured in the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Awards the duo received include best instrumental group at the Country and Western Jamboree from 1955 to 1958, Music Reporter's 1961 most popular male stars, and *Billboard's* 1963 favorite country group. With both individual and team-written songs such as "Foggy Mountain Special," "Earl's Breakdown," and "Songs of Our Land," Flatt and Scruggs laid the foundation of bluegrass music and, until the duo split in 1969, enjoyed much success.

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Scott Baugh

The Flintstones (1960-1966), about a "modern Stone-Age family," was the first successful prime-time animated series on American television. Its continuing popularity can be seen not only in years of reruns and revivals, and the 1994 live-action feature, but in over 4,000 merchandise tie-ins from clothing to vitamins.

After their success with children's shows like *Huckleberry Hound* and *Yogi Bear*, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera were urged by Screen Gems (the television arm of

Columbia Pictures) to develop a prime-time animated series. They worked out the concept of parodying current situation comedies, especially *The Honeymooners* and *Father Knows Best*, with the twist of setting them in a different historical era. Cartoonists Dan Gordon and Bill Benedict had the idea to use a Stone Age setting (although the Fleischer Studios produced a similar series of *Stone Age Cartoons* back in 1940). The concept was bought by ABC, and premiered Sept. 30, 1960. Voiced by Alan Reed, Jr. (Fred Flintstone), Mel Blanc (Barney Rubble), Jean VanderPyl (Wilma Flintstone) and veteran actress Bea Benaderet (Betty Rubble), *The Flintstones* finished the season in the Nielsen ratings' top 20, and won a number of industry awards, including the Golden Globe, and an Emmy nomination for best comedy series of 1960-61.

A clear appeal of the series lays in its parody of sitcom formula plots, and there are elements of satire in the way modern consumer conveniences are turned into sight gags. One of the show's favorite gags was to have cameos by Stone Age versions of modern celebrities (Ann Margrock, Stony Curtis, etc.). The most popular gimmick was Wilma's pregnancy, ending with the February 1963 "birth" of their little girl, Pebbles. The next season the Rubbles adopted Bamm-Bamm, a little boy of incredible strength and a one-word vocabulary.

By the fifth and sixth seasons, the show began to use more storylines aimed at kids, with new neighbors the Gruesomes (a spin on *The Munsters* and *The Addams Family*), and magical space alien The Great Gazoo (Harvey Korman). The show was cancelled after 166 episodes in 1966, but went immediately into syndication to find continued success. That same year, Columbia released *The Man Called Flintstone*, a theatrical feature spoofing James Bond.

The Flintstones were revived several times as Saturday morning series, starting in 1971 with *Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm*, pitting the adolescent pair in Archie-type hijinks, then in 1980 with *The Flintstones Comedy Show*. *The Flintstone Kids* (1986) followed the trend of presenting well-known cartoon stars as children.

The idea of a live-action movie languished for several years until Steven Spielberg brought the project through dozens of writers and lassoed John Goodman as the natural choice to play Fred. *The Flintstones* opened in May 1994, to good box office from audiences who wanted to see the original cartoon gags and catchphrases, although most critics were not impressed.

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Mark McDermott