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Child's Play

UK : 1954 : dir. : Group 3 : c80 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Christopher Beeny; Wendy Wescott; Ian Smith; Anneke Willys; Ernest Scott; Patrick Wells; Elain Sykes

Mona Washbourne; Peter Martyn; Dorothy Alison; Ingeborg Wells; Carl Jaffe; Joan Young;
 Ballard Berkeley; Robert Raglan; Mai Bacon; Molly Raynor; Barbara Hicks; Jack May;
 John Sharp; Peter Sallis; Robert Lankasheer; Wyndham Goldie

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ≠ Z ☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on
 Television review:

"Super quiz-kids beat security to play with
 atomic apparatus; most unlikely; Mona
 Washbourne is the biggest star it can boast.
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[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide",
 "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The
 Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and
 Video Guide", "Movies on TV and
 Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the
 Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film
 Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide
 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video
 Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film
 Guide"]

What's On TV review:

"A group of children form a secret society and
 one of their aims is to blow up the village
 bobby, who is their sworn enemy. While
 attempting to make a weapon, they accidentally
 split the atom and chaos ensues in this engaging
 British comedy-fantasy. ** "

"A young boy invents atomic popcorn - much to
 the despair of his parents."

The Holy Terrors:

Horation FlynnChristopher Beeny
 Mary HuxleyWendy Wescott
 Tom ChizzlerIan Smith
 Alice NightingaleAnneke Willys
 Ernest ChappelErnest Scott
 Hain Einstein BlotzPatrick Wells
 Linda ChappelElain Sykes

Not to be confused with the 1972 Sidney Lumet thriller of the same name, or the 1988 horror
 title with its own clutch of dubious sequels. I can say fairly confidently this one's the most fun.
 One hesitates to call it science fiction - there's not a jot of science to it – but, like
 "SUPERMAN" itself, it toys with some of science's exciting ideas, and that is all that SF really
 does. It has an "Ealing Comedy" tone, but was very clearly made for child audiences.

We begin as always with a secret children's gang. One of the "Holy Terrors" happens to
 possess a chunk of Krakatoa among his mineral collection, and this mysterious lump of debris
 serves very well as a radioactive core in the atomic device the children hammer gleefully
 together. One of the boys - Han Einstein Blotz, no less - is a bit of a boffin, you see, his dad
 being a German research scientist. After a spot of nuclear testing sends the authorities into a
 very British flutter, the gang decide to convert their atomic device to more peaceful purposes -
 namely a popcorn machine, and the end product, "bang corn", sells like hot cakes locally. So
 far so plausible.

As the net closes in and the authorities realise they were wrong-footed by a cell of primary school terrorists, there are red faces in high places (queue newsreel footage showing children around the world beside themselves with mirth) and red bottoms in lower ones. The children have a secret gobbledegook language which sad old grown-ups can't follow, ("sally wad olly wold growly-wown ups colly-wan't folly-wollow, etc) and although they prove steadfast under police interrogation their resistance is broken when an eavesdropping policewoman proves to understand the language too. "Thally-wanks" says her sergeant. Very 1950s; corny and quaint and utterly disconnected from reality. But quite disarming for all those same reasons. As in the "**JUST WILLIAM**" films, the more hectic moments dispense with incidental sound altogether, relying simply on "jolly japes" music, which looks particularly amateurish now.

Christopher Beeny, a boy all ears and giggles, plays the group chatterbox and narrator of the film, one Horation Flynn. Beeny (here 14, if Holmstrom's information is to be believed, although he looks no more than 8 or 9), had small parts in "**THE LONG MEMORY**" (52), "**THE KIDNAPPERS**" (53) and was later seen in "**IT'S A GREAT DAY**" and "**MAN OF THE MOMENT**" (both 55) but was more readily known as Lennie Grove in British TV's first authentic soap opera, "**The Grove Family**" (53-56). His chief celebrity as an adult actor came as a footman in "**Upstairs Downstairs**". Nothing else is known of the other child players.

See subject index under **COMEDY, ENTERPRISE / YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS, FOLLOW-THE-LEADER (CHILDREN'S GANGS)** and **SCIENCE FICTION**.