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Stephen Fry: Doctor Who is a children's programme

QI host hits out at the 'infantilism' of British TV, saying many programmes are like 'chicken nuggets'

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Stephen Fry has criticised BBC dramas, such as Doctor Who, saying they are 'not for adults' Photograph: Steve Forrest/Rex Features

Broadcaster [Stephen Fry](#) last night hit out at the "infantilism" of British TV and said that heavily promoted shows like [Doctor Who](#), while being good programmes, were the equivalent of chicken nuggets.

He also spoke of the "absurdity" of some compliance rules, and said "fear" is everywhere in the television industry in this country.

Fry, who hosts QI, said that the programmes were "like a chicken nugget. Every now and again we all like it ... But if you are an adult you want something surprising, savoury, sharp, unusual, cosmopolitan, alien, challenging, complex, ambiguous, possibly even slightly disturbing and wrong.

"You want to try those things, because that's what being adult means."

Fry was delivering the Bafta Annual Television Lecture in central London.

During a question and answer session after his speech, Fry told the audience: "If I wanted to be angry ... I would say infantilism's the problem.

"The number of times I turn on the television and I think 'Gosh, children's television's gone on, that's a really good art documentary ... Oh my God, it's nine o'clock in the evening. This is for grown-ups?' It's just shocking.

"The only drama the BBC will boast about are Merlin and Doctor Who, which are fine, but they're children's programmes. They're not for adults.

"And they're very good children's programmes, don't get me wrong, they're wonderfully written ... but they are not for adults.

Fry said he was not arguing that all television should be pompous, academic or intellectual.

"But they ought to surprise and to astonish and to make us feel perhaps the possibility there is a world outside that we know nothing of to provoke us, to provoke in the best sense of the word, sometimes in the worst sense," he said.

"To surprise us, to outrage us."

Fry also highlighted what he felt was a lack of confidence among producers, although said the BBC would point to shows such as Gavin and Stacey and Little Britain.

He said: "These are very successful. But they are also unbelievably Balkanised.

"They are set into a particular demographic. This is what I mean by television not being the nation's fireplace. ..

"It's just all parcelled and I don't know that there's a solution to it."

Fry said that compliance issues and boxes that had to be ticked were what "everyone knows the public don't want".

He also said that the Sachsgate scandal involving Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand helped fuel a sense of "fear".

He mentioned a friend who was involved in making an episode of spy drama Spooks who was told a character had to wear a seatbelt in their car while saving London in the plot.

He also said it was mentioned the actor should pull over while talking on the phone, despite someone having been shot in an earlier scene.

Fry later said: "The temptation to scream 'F*** off' so loudly... there is no possible excuse, defence or claim that you can make that justifies such absurdity.