

## INTRODUCTION

In the following pages we present, in a single volume, a lifetime (or several lifetimes) of television series, from the brash new medium of the 1940s to the explosion of choice in the 2000s. More than 6,500 series can be found here, from *I Love Lucy* to *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *The Arthur Murray [Dance] Party* to *Dancing with the Stars*, *E/R* to *ER* (both with George Clooney!), *Lost in Space* to *Lost on Earth* to *Lost Civilizations* to simply *Lost*. Since the listings are alphabetical, *Milton Berle* and *The Mind of Mencia* are next-door neighbors, as are *Gilligan's Island* and *The Gilmore Girls*. There's also proof that good ideas don't fade away, they just keep coming back in new duds. *American Idol*, meet *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*.

We both work, or have worked, in the TV industry, care about its history, and have done everything possible to get the facts correct. If you have an earlier edition of this book, there are thousands of additions and improvements here, appearing on every page (this new edition adds the equivalent of a new 200- to 300-page book to the last one). The book has been carefully researched for the scholar, but it is also, like television itself, for your enjoyment—as well as for trivia quizzes, bet-settling and gifts for that TV fan you know. Guard your copy, though. People get so interested in what's in here that the book might “walk away.”

### **The Rules: What's in This Book (Listen Carefully!)**

This encyclopedia lists regular series carried on the commercial broadcast and cable networks in early evening, prime time and late night (roughly, between 6:00 P.M. and 3:00 A.M.). In addition we have included the top syndicated programs that have aired primarily in the evening hours. We cover the entire history of network TV in the United States, from its inception on a regular basis in 1944 through April 15, 2007. Our definition of a “series” is a program that ran for at least four consecutive weeks in the same time slot—or was intended to.

A few program types are found under gen-

eral headings. For example, newscasts are summarized under *News*, movie series under *Movies* and sports coverage under *Football*, *Boxing*, *Wrestling*, etc. All other series are arranged by title in alphabetical order. There is a comprehensive index at the back to every cast member, plus appendixes showing annual network schedules at a glance, the top 30 rated series each season, Emmy Awards and other information.

Network series are defined as those fed out by broadcast or cable networks and seen simultaneously across most of the country. Broadcast networks covered are ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CW, MyNetworkTV, ION (formerly PAX) and the dear, departed DuMont, UPN and WB.

Original cable series are listed in two different ways. Major series seen on the largest cable networks (those reaching at least 50 percent of U.S. homes) are generally listed alphabetically and in detail; others, including those appearing on less widely available networks or on networks without regular series schedules (like news, weather and documentary channels) may be summarized under the network's name. Due to the flood of new series on cable in recent years we have had to become somewhat selective in which cable series to include. Favored for inclusion are (1) series with casts, such as dramas and sitcoms, (2) series that had reasonably long runs, typically two seasons or more, and (3) series of any type with especially large audiences. There are more than 1,000 cable entries, including shows and entries for all the major cable networks. If you don't find a cable show under its own name, check under the network.

Syndicated series are sold by their producers to individual stations, and are therefore seen at different times in different cities, and not at all in some areas. Thousands of syndicated programs have been produced over the years, many with very limited distribution. Only the principal ones are included here. As with cable series, and with some exceptions, the general rule is that they must have been available to at least half of all U.S. television

homes. Other programs that may have been seen in your city after 6:00 P.M.—but are not included here—are local programs and syndicated series which did not achieve widespread distribution.

This is the first book to trace programming back to the very founding of the networks, and, consequently, it includes some very early network series that were seen in only two or three cities on the East Coast. The networks spread quickly, however, first by sending out kinescopes (films) of their shows to nonconnected stations, and soon after with live connections to stations in the Midwest (in 1949) and on the West Coast (in 1951).

Under each series' main heading you will find the following:

*First/Last Telecast:* The dates on which the series was first and last seen on a network. This includes repeats on a network during its original run, but not later reruns on local stations, which will be at a different time in each city, and may go on long after the program has ceased production. Generally the first and last telecast dates indicate the original production run of a network series.

*Broadcast History:* The days, times, and networks on which the series was carried (eastern time). Special episodes which ran for only one or two weeks in other than the normal time slot are not reflected. DUM indicates the DuMont TV network, and (OS) indicates that the

program was off during the summer months. For syndicated and cable series, we have indicated the years the program was in production, and when it was first telecast.

*Cast:* Regular cast members, those who were seen on a recurring basis, are listed along with the years in which they were seen during the original run. We have gone to considerable effort to separate regulars from guests making occasional appearances, as the latter were not part of the continuing casts. Notable guests may be listed in the series description.

Principal sources of scheduling information were the files of the networks, cross-checked against detailed logs maintained over the years by NBC and ratings reports from Nielsen Media Research. For the very earliest programs, listings in *TV Guide* and various newspapers were consulted; however, readers should be aware that pretelecast publicity does not always reflect what actually aired. Nielsen rating reports are useful as they indicate, after the fact, what was actually telecast. Cast and content data were drawn from a multitude of sources including network and syndicator files, press releases, listings in *TV Guide*, reviews in *Variety*, *Billboard*, and *Television* magazines, Internet Web sites, and, of course, our viewing of the shows. Yes, we watch almost everything.

—T.B. and E.M.

## A Short History of Network Television

by Tim Brooks

Television goes back a good deal further than most people realize. There was no single inventor of television, although Dr. Vladimir Zworykin's invention of the iconoscope in 1923 provided a basic element, the "eye" of the TV camera. Demonstrations of various kinds of experimental TV were made in the late 1920s, including even primitive color television in 1929. General Electric began semiregular telecasts from its laboratories in Schenectady in May 1928, mostly for the benefit of a few nearby engineers who had receiving sets. NBC opened experimental TV station W2XBS in New York in 1930, followed by a similar CBS station in 1931. But for the next several years TV seemed to go nowhere. Pictures were fuzzy, screens tiny, and costs astronomical. In addition, there were several incompatible types of transmission, and engineers spent much time arguing over a single set of technical standards—something we take for granted today.

For the public at large the 1930s was the

decade of radio, when virtually every home had a set, and superstars and hit shows became a familiar phenomenon. Comedies, dramas, quiz shows, and variety hours were all developed for a mass market, establishing formats that would later be transferred virtually intact to television. While radio and TV are only vaguely related technically, there is no doubt that the great radio networks of the 1930s were the direct entertainment predecessors of today's TV.

By the end of the 1930s interest in TV was picking up. In 1938 NBC transmitted several notable telecasts from its New York station, including scenes from the Broadway play *Susan and God* starring Gertrude Lawrence and Paul McGrath from the original cast. Also in that year the NBC station carried the first live, unscheduled coverage of a news event in progress. An NBC mobile unit happened to be working in a park in Queens, New York, when a fire broke out on Ward's Island, across the river. The TV crew swung their

cameras around and telecast live pictures of the raging fire to surprised viewers.

Looking for a memorable event with which to inaugurate regular TV service, NBC decided upon the official opening of the World's Fair in New York on April 30, 1939. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was seen arriving and delivering the opening address, thus becoming the first incumbent president to appear on television. NBC announcer Bill Farren described the proceedings and also conducted interviews at the fairground. Thereafter, from 1939–1941, both NBC and CBS presented a surprisingly extensive schedule of programs over their New York stations for the several thousand sets then in use. There were few regular “series,” however—every night was an event. If you had a set, you simply turned it on at night (there was seldom anything telecast during the day) and saw what was being sent out from the studios that night. Anything that moved was worth watching.

A sample night's entertainment, shortly after the World's Fair inaugural, was called simply *The Wednesday Night Program* and ran from 8:00–9:07 P.M. It opened with a fashion show described by commentators Renee Macredy and Nancy Turner, followed by songs by The Three Smoothies, a sketch called “The Smart Thing” (cast included Martha Sleeper, Ned Wever, and Burford Hampden), dancer Hal Sherman from the show *Hellzapoppin'*, and finally a magic act by Robert Reinhart, who also served as emcee of the program. If you've never heard of most of these names, neither had most viewers in 1939. Appearances by stars, especially the big names of radio, were few and far between, and television had to rely primarily on cabaret talent and young, lesser-known Broadway actors and actresses for many years to come.

Viewers didn't mind. There was a common bond of pioneering between viewers and broadcasters in those days, and in fact a good deal of communication both ways. NBC kept a card file listing every known set owner and sent out postcards each week listing the programs to be telecast, asking the viewer's opinion of each one. These were the first TV “ratings.”

Most television programs were seen in New York only, which was, throughout the 1940s, America's TV “capital.” It was the first city with more than one station operating, and it had by far the largest number of sets in people's homes. However, the possibility of networking, along the lines of the great radio chains, was pursued from the very beginning. As early as 1940 NBC began to relay some telecasts to the General Electric station

in Schenectady, thus forming history's first network of sorts. (The feasibility of transmitting pictures between two widely separated cities had been demonstrated in 1927, when Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, speaking in Washington, D.C., was seen in a New York laboratory, by special hookup.) The New York–Schenectady link was accomplished by the simple method of having General Electric pick up the signal off the air from New York, 130 miles away, and rebroadcast it. The picture quality thus obtained was not very good. In 1941 some NBC New York telecasts began to be fed to the Philco station in Philadelphia as well, giving NBC a three-station “network.” But all of this was intermittent, and there were still no regular series as we know them today.

Commercial television first saw the light of day in 1941, when both NBC and CBS were granted commercial licenses for their New York stations, both on July 1st (so neither could claim a “first”). NBC's call letters became WNBT on channel one (now WNBC-TV on channel four), and CBS got WCBW on channel two (now WCBS-TV).

Just as commercial television was beginning to take root, World War II put a stop to everything. Little was telecast during the war years, except for some training programs. The DuMont Laboratories, which had been experimenting with TV for years, received a commercial license in 1944 for WABD, New York (now WNYW-TV on channel five), serving as the cornerstone of that company's ill-fated network venture.

With the war over, work started anew. The year 1946 marked the true beginnings of regular network series. NBC's WNBT began feeding its programs on a more or less regular basis to Philadelphia and Schenectady, forming NBC's “East Coast Network.” DuMont opened a second station, WTTG, in Washington, D.C., to which it fed programs—even though there were in mid-1946 only a bare dozen sets in the nation's capital. Network television's first major series effort, and the program which set many precedents for programs to come, was a regular Thursday night big-budget variety hour called *Hour Glass*, which ran for ten months beginning in May 1946. It was a pioneer in many ways and helped spread the word that television could provide not only a novelty gadget for the gadget-minded, but regular high-quality family entertainment as well.

Several other network series began in 1946, including the long-running *You Are an Artist*, Mrs. Carveth Wells's *Geographically Speaking*, *Television Screen Magazine* (an

early version of *60 Minutes*), *Play the Game* (charades), *Cash and Carry* (quiz), *Face to Face* (drawings), *I Love to Eat* (cooking), and *Faraway Hill* (the first network soap opera). All of these programs can be found under their individual headings in this book.

Most early programming was quite experimental, just to see what would work in the new medium. Costs were kept to a minimum, and advertising agencies were given free time by the stations, to get them into the studio to try out TV. (Programs were often produced by the advertisers themselves.) Such visual formats as charades, cartooning, and fashion shows were favorites, along with sports events and adaptations of radio shows, telecast on a one-time tryout basis.

A landmark was the premiere of *Kraft Television Theatre* in May 1947. This was not only the first regularly scheduled drama series to go out over a network, but was also blessed with sufficient money from a sponsor to insure uniformly high-quality productions.

Gradually stations were added to NBC's and DuMont's chains, two more stations in Washington, D.C., additional facilities in Philadelphia, then Baltimore, then Boston. Stations not connected with the East Coast opened in the Midwest and Far West, often receiving network programs on kinescope.

But where were CBS and ABC?

Both were fully committed to the idea of networking, but each hung back for a different reason. ABC did not yet have a New York flagship station on the air from which to originate programming. ABC had in fact been buying time on other stations and producing programs on their schedules just to give its own technicians experience in studio production techniques, against the day when ABC would have its own station. An early example was *Play the Game* (1946), which was produced by ABC using DuMont's facilities. In early 1948 ABC lined up a network of four stations, a curious amalgam of DuMont and independent stations, for a series called *On the Corner* with radio star Henry Morgan—which it now considers its first “network” program (although *Play the Game* was also seen over a network). Finally, in August 1948 ABC got its own New York station and production center on the air and began network service on a regular basis.

CBS delayed its entry into network television for quite a different reason. It had had an active New York station for years. But CBS was committed to the idea of color TV, and tried hard to get its own color system accepted by the Federal Communications Commission as the industry standard. This would have

meant color TV from the start for everyone, and would also have made obsolete all of the equipment in use by CBS' rivals because the different systems were incompatible. The choice had to be color or black and white, but not both. Unfortunately, the CBS system was clumsy and unreliable compared with the fairly well-developed black-and-white TV of the day, and its adoption would probably have set TV back several years. (Eventually the CBS electromechanical system, with its spinning disc within every set, was discarded altogether. It is RCA's all-electronic, black-and-white compatible color system that we use today.) While the verdict was out, CBS delayed investment in a network.

Two events changed CBS' mind. First, a critical government decision went against the CBS color system. Then the NBC network's coverage of the 1947 World Series—the first World Series on TV—suddenly made it very apparent that an explosion in TV set ownership was about to take place. CBS, if it did not move quickly, was in danger of being left at the starting gate. A crash program of series development was instituted, and early in 1948 CBS began feeding programs out over its own small network.

The 1947 World Series brought in television's first mass audience. It was carried in New York, Philadelphia, Schenectady, and Washington, D.C., and was seen by an estimated 3.9 million people—3.5 million of them in bars! The TV set over the corner bar was a first introduction to the new medium for many people, and it helped sell thousands of sets for the home. After that, TV ownership was contagious. The first set on the block always brought in dozens of curious neighbors, who eventually went out and bought sets of their own.

By 1948 television networking was on its way. Several of the longest running programs included in this book premiered in that year, including Ted Mack's *Original Amateur Hour* in January, Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater* in June, Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* in June, and *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* in December. NBC opened its midwestern network of stations in September 1948, and in a special ceremonial telecast on January 11, 1949, East and Midwest were linked. For a time Chicago was an important production center for network programs, but without the talent pool available in New York it could not compete for long. *Kukla, Fran & Ollie* and *Garroway at Large* were probably the most important series to come out of Chicago in its TV heyday.

In September 1951 the link was completed

to the West Coast, and America at last had nationwide television. Los Angeles was not to become the principal network production center until Hollywood-produced filmed dramatic shows became the TV norm during the second half of the 1950s, however.

In the early years of network operation NBC had the largest audiences, with *Milton Berle*, *Kraft Television Theatre*, *Your Show of Shows*, *Dragnet*, and other top hits. But by the mid-1950s, through a combination of astute program development (*I Love Lucy*, *Ed Sullivan*) and carryovers from its top radio shows (*Arthur Godfrey*, *Jack Benny*), CBS took the lead, which it proudly retained for two decades thereafter. Nevertheless, NBC and CBS, the two giants of TV, were never far apart. ABC and DuMont were far behind, fighting for survival—for it was rapidly becoming apparent that there was room for only one other network in the U.S. There were several reasons for this. For one thing the talent pool available for successful TV shows was severely limited and very high priced. NBC and CBS had so many of the trump cards that there just wasn't very much left over for another network, much less for two others. Whenever a new talent emerged on DuMont or ABC, such as Ted Mack (*Original Amateur Hour*) or Jackie Gleason, he would soon be stolen away by the "majors" with the promise of much more money.

Even more important, there were a limited number of stations to go around. Outside of New York and a few other large cities, very few places in the U.S. were serviced by more than two, or perhaps three, stations (some areas still aren't). NBC and CBS always got the best stations in each city, leaving ABC and DuMont to fight for the scraps, or perhaps be seen only part-time on a "shared" station.

In many ways DuMont seemed to be in a good position to become America's third network. The company was led by a brilliant and progressive engineer, Dr. Allen B. DuMont, who seemed to have made all the right decisions at the right times. He was involved in experimental television broadcasting from his laboratory in New Jersey in the early 1930s, long before ABC was even founded (in 1943, as a spin-off from NBC). DuMont had a base in manufacturing, and in fact marketed the first large screen (14-inch) home TV set in 1938. Knowing that large amounts of capital would be needed for television development, he obtained financing from giant Paramount Pictures in 1938 and began active TV programming in the early 1940s. DuMont was close on the heels of NBC in setting up a network in 1946–1947, and its production facili-

ties were the most elaborate in the industry. What went wrong?

One important factor working against DuMont was the fact that the company did not operate a radio network, as did NBC, CBS, and ABC. An established radio network not only provided its competitors with a ready talent pool to draw on, but also gave them a foot in the door in signing up choice affiliates (which were usually associated with network radio stations) in many cities. Another devastating blow was a ruling by the government that DuMont, unlike the other three networks, could not own the legal maximum of five television stations.

Most of the affiliates over which the TV networks send their programs are locally owned. Each network could by law own outright only five VHF stations. These five were critically important because they provided the base of revenues to support the network (for years the networks themselves all lost money). They also guaranteed that all of the network's programs would be seen in at least those five markets. NBC, CBS, and ABC each obtained their quota of five stations early in the game. But because of a series of complicated legal rulings involving its relationship with Paramount Pictures (which also owned stations), DuMont could not, and thus was denied both the revenues and guaranteed program clearances that a full roster of five big-market stations could provide. In addition, Paramount refused to give DuMont any further financial support after 1939.

ABC had financial problems too, but in 1953 it got the boost it needed by merging with United Paramount Theaters. With a heavy infusion of capital provided by the merger, ABC began developing programs in earnest, including the landmark deal in 1954 that brought *Walt Disney* to television and in 1955 the arrangement with Warner Brothers that produced many hit series (see under *Warner Bros. Presents*). With the ABC-Paramount Theaters merger, DuMont's fate was sealed, and the latter network finally went out of business in 1956.

Structurally, little changed in TV networking for the next thirty years. In the mid-1950s, compatible color TV was introduced, pushed hard by NBC (whose parent company, RCA, manufactured the sets). Video tape effected a behind-the-scenes revolution in the 1960s by freeing producers from the cumbersome aspects of film and the hectic uncertainty of live production. There was periodic talk of a fourth national network, such as the ill-fated Overmyer Network ("ON") in the 1960s, but nothing came of it

until 20th Century-Fox launched its Fox Network in 1986 (with the ill-fated *Late Show Starring Joan Rivers*). Even network ownership remained unchanged until the 1980s. The giant conglomerate ITT and later billionaire Howard Hughes each tried to buy ABC, but no one succeeded until a cash-rich station owner, Capital Cities Broadcasting, swallowed the network in January 1986. Five months later the giant General Electric Co. gobbled up RCA, and with it NBC. CBS was taken over by investor Laurence Tisch three months after that.

It took ABC nearly thirty years to reach parity with CBS and NBC in audience size. It did not have a number-one rated series until *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, in the 1970s, and it did not rank number one as a network for a full season until 1976–1977, when longtime leader CBS was finally deposed. In the 1980s CBS recaptured first place, then yielded to NBC. But the race among them became increasingly irrelevant compared to the decline in viewership of all three as viewers flocked to cable TV, which offered both convenient reruns of classic network fare and original programming of its own. The “big three” still command the largest audiences, but with more than 80 percent of American homes receiving alternative programming via cable or satellite, that is changing. TV itself is flourishing. It once seemed that people might finally be getting tired of it; today they’re watching more than ever, from a greater and greater variety of sources.

### Trends in Programming: The Eight Eras of Prime Time

Television programming has changed a great deal over the years, both in style and content. Each decade has had its program trends, reflecting not only the evolving tastes of the American public, but also important behind-the-scenes changes in the business that determine what we see. We have come a long way from the silly slapstick of Milton Berle to today’s raunchy relevance.

Prime time program history can be divided into eight principal eras.

#### The First Era: “Vaudeo” (1948–1957)

In the beginning there was Milton Berle. His time at the top was actually rather short—his series ranked number one for three seasons (1948–1951), in a period when relatively few people even had a TV set. Later major hits such as *I Love Lucy*, *Gunsmoke*, and *All in the Family* were number one for a longer time and were seen by far more peo-

ple. But Uncle Miltie’s influence was enormous. Not only was he TV’s first superstar, but the excitement he created for the new medium helped television ownership spread like wildfire, from less than 2 percent of U.S. homes when he premiered in 1948 to over 70 percent by the time he left the air in 1956.

Berle’s Tuesday night *Texaco Star Theater* was typical of the first wave of television programming—frantic, corny, but always highly visual. If ordinary people were going to spend \$400 for a small-screen “radio with pictures,” they wanted to see movement and action, and lots of it. Berle gave them fall-down slapstick with crazy costumes and sight gags galore. Ed Sullivan offered a three-ring circus of comedians, acrobats, opera singers, scenes from plays, and dancing bears. *The Ed Wynn Show*, *The All Star Revue* with Jimmy Durante, *Your Show of Shows* with Sid Caesar, *Fireball Fun-For-All* with Olsen and Johnson, and *The Colgate Comedy Hour* with practically everybody (Eddie Cantor, Martin and Lewis, Abbott and Costello, Bob Hope) all did the same. Such broadly played slapstick and variety looked so old fashioned that some called it “vaudeo”—a wedding of vaudeville and the new video medium.

Other types of series exploited the new medium’s visual possibilities even further. *I’d Like to See* and *You Asked for It* brought viewers their own visual requests. *Photographic Horizons* showed models posing so that home viewers could take pictures of them right off the screen. Pantomime shows like Mike Stokey’s *Pantomime Quiz* were popular.

Variety programs, however, drew the largest audiences. Talent shows proliferated, led by *Arthur Godfrey’s Talent Scouts* (for up-and-coming professionals) and *The Original Amateur Hour* (for your local tap dancers and kazoo players). Future stars like Jack Klugman, Pernell Roberts, and Martin Balsam could be seen trying out on *Hollywood Screen Test*, but Godfrey’s audition staff flunked a greasy-haired young singer named Elvis Presley before he could even get on the air!

Early situation comedies frequently used broadly played physical comedy. The number one hit in the mid-1950s was *I Love Lucy*, with the inspired mugging of Lucy and the continual exasperation of her bandleader husband, Desi. There were many others, including *The Life of Riley*, *The Stu Erwin Show*, Jackie Gleason’s *Honeymooners*, and *Red Skelton*. Of the major stars of the day, only Jack Benny and Groucho Marx seemed to rely primarily on verbal humor. Another

popular genre was the family comedy, full of warm, homey values and typified by *The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet*, *The Danny Thomas Show (Make Room for Daddy)*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Mama*. Such family shows have been among TV's longest running series.

Although vaudeville dominated early TV, some series tried a more intimate approach. Much of Arthur Godfrey's appeal was due to his folksy, down-to-earth humor, and his weekly variety show, *Arthur Godfrey & His Friends*, had an easygoing pace. Godfrey did not showcase stars; instead, his regular "family" of performers including Tony Martin, the Chordettes, Julius LaRosa, and Frank Parker and Marion Marlowe were seen every week. Dave Garroway was also known for his wry, low-key style, while singer/host Perry Como was so relaxed that he became the butt of jokes: "Wake up, Perry!"

"Serious" television was represented mainly by dramatic anthology series, which offered a different play with a new cast each week. Some of these series had a unifying theme, like the newsworthiness of *Armstrong Circle Theatre* and *The Big Story*, but most simply presented good drama drawn from a variety of sources (original scripts, short stories, adaptations of the classics). Among the more popular of these stage-type series were *Kraft Television Theatre*, *General Electric Theater*, *Philco/Goodyear TV Playhouse*, *Ford Theatre*, *Fireside Theatre*, *Robert Montgomery Presents*, and *Studio One*. The last of these great series, *Playhouse 90*, left the air in 1961. Another kind of innovation was represented by the daring, though never highly popular, series of Ernie Kovacs, who experimented with the visual comedy effects possible in the new medium.

There were relatively few action or adventure shows in the early days, largely because of the studio-bound technical requirements of TV. *Dragnet* was the most popular police show, and one of the few series filmed in Hollywood—most of the big variety, comedy, and playhouse series originated live from New York. But that was to change.

### The "Adult Westerns" Era (1957–early 1960s)

Saturday, September 10, 1955, was an important night in television history. If you were watching CBS at 10 P.M. that evening you saw big John Wayne, standing by a corral, introducing a new series that he had been asked to star in. He couldn't take the role, but he had recommended a lanky young actor to take his place. It proved to be

a lucky break for Jim Arness, who would star for the next 20 years in *Gunslinger*. The series started off slowly in the ratings, but quickly gained momentum and was followed by a veritable stampede of others: *Cheyenne*; *Have Gun, Will Travel*; *Tales of Wells Fargo*; *Wagon Train*; *Rawhide*; *Wanted: Dead or Alive*; *The Virginian*. There were variations on the theme, including true-history Westerns (*Life & Legend of Wyatt Earp*), anthology Westerns (*Zane Grey Theater*), "family" Westerns (*The Rifleman*), and even a Western that satirized the other Westerns (*Maverick*). By 1958–1959, seven out of the top ten series were Westerns—a dominance seldom achieved by any program type.

What set these series apart from earlier kids' Westerns like *The Lone Ranger* and *Hopalong Cassidy* was that they were written for adults, in the style of such recent movie hits as *High Noon* and *Shane*. They often tackled adult subjects and relationships: Just what was the relationship between Matt Dillon and Miss Kitty, anyway? Kids could still enjoy the action, while adults got something more than a Saturday-matinee plot and a moral.

TV violence took its first major upswing during the era of the adult Western, to the dismay of critics. The range of weapons used by TV's horseback crusaders was truly remarkable.

The adult Westerns signaled a major change in the source of prime-time TV programming. All of them were on film, and most of them were produced by the major Hollywood movie studios, which had previously avoided involvement with television as if it were the plague. From this time on most TV series would be products of Hollywood's dream factories rather than the live, theater-influenced New York stage. Like a product's switch from wood to plastic, this change made an important difference in the texture and "feel" of all future entertainment programs.

The last hurrah for live, Eastern-originated programming was the big-money quiz show fad which began in the summer of 1955 with the fabulous success of *The \$64,000 Question*. The quiz shows were marvelous theater; a contestant agonized in an isolation booth while the host ticked off a complicated, multipart question which could be worth a fabulous amount of money. There was usually just one climactic question per week, for ever greater amounts of money. The suspense from week to week was palpable, and contestant-heroes like Charles Van Doren on *Twenty-One* became national celebrities as they slowly climbed from obscurity to wealth before America's eyes—on live TV. Unfor-

**Series**

*Wanted: Dead or Alive*  
*The Rifleman*

*Wyatt Earp*  
*Shotgun Slade*  
*Adventures of Jim Bowie*  
*Cisco Kid*  
*Hotel de Paree*

**Weapon**

Steve McQueen's sawed-off carbine  
Chuck Connors's fast-cocking Winchester  
with a large ring that supposedly  
allowed him to fire off the first round in  
three tenths of a second  
Hugh O'Brian's oversized Buntline pistol  
Scott Brady's unique two-in-one shotgun  
Scott Forbes's Bowie knife  
Pancho's bullwhip  
The shiny little discs in Earl Holliman's  
Stetson, with which he could blind  
adversaries

tunately some of the shows turned out to have been fixed (contestants were given the answers beforehand, and coached on how to triumph or fail on cue). They were all swept off the air in 1958–1959 in one of television's most embarrassing scandals.

While the adult Westerns were at their zenith another type of filmed program took root, a type that proved to be one of the most durable formats of all. The "swinging detectives" were sexy, as fast with a wisecrack as with a gun, and usually operated in an exotic locale. They began with *77 Sunset Strip* in 1958, which combined a couple of hip private eyes, some beautiful women, a colorful sidekick (Kookie), and the glamorous backdrop of L.A.'s Sunset Strip. In the wake of its success came *Hawaiian Eye*, *Peter Gunn*, *Checkmate*, *Burke's Law*, and many others right up to *Magnum, P.I.* and *Remington Steele* in the 1980s.

By the early 1960s the flood of adult Westerns was beginning to abate. There were simply too many of them on the air—as many as 31 in a single season—and new entries found it hard to attract attention. Does anyone today remember 1960–1961's *Gunslinger* (Tony Young), *Stagecoach West* (Wayne Rogers), or *The Westerner* (Brian Keith with a mongrel dog)?

**Number of Westerns in Prime Time,  
by Season**

1955–1956:	9
1956–1957:	11
1957–1958:	20
1958–1959:	31
1959–1960:	30
1960–1961:	26
1961–1962:	16
1962–1963:	13
1963–1964:	8
1964–1965:	7

A second factor in the demise of the Westerns was concern over TV violence, which had centered on crime shows such as *The Untouchables* and *Bus Stop*, but which spilled over into Westerns as well. By 1961 Congress was holding hearings on the subject, and network executives were under heavy pressure to tone things down.

Even more important forces were at work behind the scenes—forces which would ultimately change all TV programming. The research companies that measured TV audiences were beginning to report those audiences in increasing detail—not only how many homes were tuned in, but detailed ages and incomes of the people who watched each show. It turned out that the adult Westerns were attracting older people, while young adults and kids were tuning to situation comedies. Since advertisers wanted to reach high-consuming young families, sitcoms were in.

**The "Idiot Sitcom" Era  
(early to late 1960s)**

The 1960s was the youth decade, and many of the comedies that poured onto the screen seemed to be aimed at the young. Most of them had a gimmick to attract attention. *Beverly Hillbillies*, the number-one program from 1962–1964, put hayseeds in high society, while *Gomer Pyle* had its bumpkin turning the Marine Corps upside down. In *Green Acres* the premise was reversed, with city folks out on the farm. *My Favorite Martian* offered reporter Bill Bixby the biggest story of his career, except that "Uncle Martin" wouldn't reveal his powers to anyone else; meanwhile pretty Samantha on *Bewitched* used her witchly powers more than husband Darrin would have liked. TV's sexiest genie, Barbara Eden, frustrated her "master" (Larry Hagman) and delighted viewers on *I Dream of Jeannie*. Bizarre, comical characters turned up on *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*,

*The Flying Nun*, and *Batman*, and slapstick silliness was alive and well on *Gilligan's Island*, *Mr. Ed*, *McHale's Navy*, *F Troop*, *Hogan's Heroes*, and many other shows.

Kids themselves were the stars of some of the comedies as in *Dennis the Menace*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, and *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. Kids like cartoons, so we had *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons* in prime time; animals turned up on *Flipper* and *Daktari*; rock music on *Shindig* and *Hullabaloo*; science fiction on *Lost in Space* and *Star Trek*.

Of the many fads that swept America in the 1960s, probably the biggest was the James Bond—super agent vogue, which started with the Bond movies in 1963–64. The trend was soon reflected on the TV screen in such hits as *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *I Spy*, *Secret Agent*, and *Mission: Impossible*. One of the funniest comedies of the 1960s, *Get Smart*, satirized the whole genre.

A few Westerns lingered on, notably *Bonanza* (the number-one series from 1964–1967) and *Gunsmoke*, which enjoyed a revival as a 7:30 P.M. kid's show. Drs. Kildare and Ben Casey kept women enthralled, as did the continuing anguish on prime time's first hit soap opera, *Peyton Place*. Men could find excitement on a wave of war shows, among them *Combat!*, *Twelve O'Clock High*, and *Garrison's Gorillas*.

Was there anything serious on TV in the early 1960s? The answer is “not much”; even the network newscasts were only 15 minutes long until 1963. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* did offer comedy written on an adult level, and *The Defenders* sometimes presented serious, relevant drama. More typical was the fate of George C. Scott's first network TV series, *East Side/West Side*, a gritty 1963 drama about an inner-city social worker; it lasted a single season opposite *Sing Along with Mitch*. The following year, *That Was the Week That Was* (“*TW3*”), a pioneering attempt at social satire, was driven off the air by *Petticoat Junction*.

#### **The Relevance Era (late 1960s–1975)**

*East Side/West Side* and *TW3* were shows ahead of their time. America was changing, and the gap between TV's land of make-believe and the real world was becoming a gulf. While Jed Clampett and Pvt. Gomer Pyle cavorted on our television screens, Kennedy and Khrushchev had brought the world to the brink of nuclear war over Cuba, and black Americans were burning and looting the slums of Los Angeles. Television, like many of society's other institutions, had to change.

The first major series of the period to acknowledge that there was a world beyond *Gilligan's Island* was *I Spy* in 1965, the series that reintroduced blacks to prime-time starring roles. Blacks had scarcely been seen on television since the early 1950s, and never in respectable, nondemeaning leading roles. *I Spy*, *Julia*, *Room 222*, and *The Mod Squad* changed all that, and dozens of black or minority series followed in the 1970s. The portrayal of women began to change as well, from the dependent housewives of *I Love Lucy* and *Donna Reed* to the liberated singles of *That Girl* and *Mary Tyler Moore*.

Direct political commentary within an entertainment format was a little longer in coming, but when it did it produced some enormous hits. *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* premiered in February 1967 as a lightweight, youth-oriented variety show, but quickly swung toward biting political satire which caused the CBS censors to have fits. On NBC, *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* premiered in 1968 with a similarly topical approach, and shot straight to the top of the ratings; it was the number-one program on television from 1968–1970.

Ratings for the fall 1970 schedule seemed to suggest that “relevant TV” might have passed its peak. A slew of highly contemporary, youth-oriented shows were introduced that fall, among them *The Storefront Lawyers*, *The Young Lawyers*, *The Senator*, and *The Young Rebels* (the 1960s youth movement transplanted to the Revolutionary War). All of them failed. But a midseason replacement, scheduled with great trepidation by CBS, gave relevance new life. *All in the Family*, about a blue-collar bigot and the folly of his ways, ranked number one among all series for five years, the longest time on top for any series in television history. In its wake came spin-offs (*Maude*, *The Jeffersons*) and a new wave of shows dealing with issues TV had scarcely ever touched before: interfaith marriage (*Bridget Loves Bernie*), anti-war sentiments (*M\*A\*S\*H*), life at the bottom of the economic ladder (*Good Times*, *Chico & The Man*). *Maude* had an abortion, and Edith Bunker was attacked by a rapist—comedy had never been like this before!

Some shows stayed away from serious issues. Action-adventure was represented by the descendants of *77 Sunset Strip*, including *Mannix*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Kojak*, *Columbo*, and *The Rockford Files*. *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie* were gentle reminders of a simpler time, carrying a message about the value of love and the nuclear family.

A situation comedy that premiered on ABC in 1974 seemed to be even more of a throwback—but *Happy Days* would prove to be a harbinger of the next era of prime-time TV programming. Major changes were about to take place, in part due to government complaints about TV violence and the increasing frankness of the relevance shows, especially in time periods when children were watching. In 1975 the networks were forced to “sanitize” their early evening line-ups with a curiously cynical concept called the 8:00–9:00 P.M. Family Viewing Time (cynical because children hardly view only between 8:00–9:00 P.M.). Henceforth, programs in that time slot would have to be suitable for “family viewing.” No rapes and no abortions.

### The ABC “Fantasy” Era (1975–1980)

As prime-time programming had swung like a pendulum from the escapism of the early 1960s to the relevance of the early 1970s, it now swung back again—at least partway. *Happy Days*, the perfect inoffensive 8:00 P.M. show, grew steadily in popularity, paralleling the vogue for one of its secondary characters, the Fonz. By 1976 it was the number-one program on television. At that time ABC’s fortunes were in the hands of Fred Silverman, a master programmer who knew how to milk a rising series for all it was worth. Using *Happy Days* as his launching pad, he built a whole evening of similarly lightweight programs on Tuesdays with *Laverne & Shirley* at 8:30 followed by the progressively sexier *Three’s Company*, *Soap*, and *Family*. The same thing worked on Wednesday, where *Eight Is Enough* captured the kids at 8 o’clock and *Charlie’s Angels* gave adults something to leer at at nine.

Other hits were carefully nurtured in strategic places throughout the week, almost all of them thoroughly escapist comedy/action (for the kids) or sexually titillating. Thursday had *Welcome Back, Kotter* and *Barney Miller*; Friday, *Donny and Marie*; Saturday, *The Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island*; and Sunday, *The Six Million Dollar Man*. *Mork and Mindy* was spun off from *Happy Days*, and *The Bionic Woman* from *The Six Million Dollar Man*. ABC, long the number-three network, vaulted to number one in the ratings for the first time in its history.

As ABC’s fantasy and sex filled the air, the other two networks struggled to compete. They managed a few imitations of the ABC style (CBS’ *Dukes of Hazzard*, NBC’s *CHiPs*), but CBS survived mostly on carryovers from its glory days of the early 1970s (it had been in the vanguard of the relevance movement), while NBC floundered with an uneven

hodgepodge typified by *The Big Event*. Few new “relevant” series were able to get a foothold; among them were *Lou Grant* and *Quincy, M.E.* “Serious” TV was relegated mostly to mini-series, such as the spectacularly successful *Roots*. In addition, *60 Minutes*, an obscure CBS public affairs series that had been bumping around the schedule since 1968, enjoyed a remarkable surge in popularity, aided by fortuitous scheduling Sunday night at 7 P.M. It happened that a peculiarity in government regulations prevented the networks from competing with entertainment series in that time slot; only “public service” was allowed. Given this protection from normal competition, *60 Minutes* caught on in a big way, eventually becoming the number-one program on television—the only news series ever to do so.

### Soap Operas and the “Real People” Era (1980s)

By 1980 ABC’s escapist hits were in decline, their novelty worn thin. Fred Silverman had defected to NBC, and new hits were hard to come by. In addition the competitive environment was changing radically. Cable TV networks were spreading across the country, and commercial broadcasters found an increasing portion of their audience siphoned off to watch commercial-free movies and specialty channels (all news, sports, rock music, etc.). With so many viewing alternatives, the commercial network schedules looked increasingly stale and derivative.

Gradually two new trends emerged. The soap opera, that serialized format so popular in daytime, became a hit in prime time as well, introducing a continuing-story element missing from most prime-time series. *Dallas* was the first major hit, followed by *Dynasty*, *Falcon Crest*, and *Knots Landing*. Other series also began to work in continuing stories, such as the rocky romances on *Hill Street Blues* and *Cheers*.

The other trend was sparked by the much talked-about *Real People* in 1979 and was, in a sense, a swing back to reality. These programs set out to reflect the real world, especially its lighter, more entertaining aspects, without necessarily trying to change it (as the relevance shows had tended to do). *That’s Incredible* and *Ripley’s Believe It or Not* followed closely in the spirit of *Real People*. *20/20* was a cross between *60 Minutes* and a celebrity magazine, while *TV’s Bloopers and Practical Jokes* was a close relation to that old snoop, *Candid Camera*. The number-one hit, *The Cosby Show*, presented a realistic view of child rearing; *Hill Street Blues* and

*St. Elsewhere* brought reality to police and doctor shows. Numerous syndicated programs picked up on the reality trend, among them *PM Magazine*, *Entertainment Tonight*, and *The People's Court*.

There were still escapist fantasies like *The A-Team*, *Knight Rider*, *The Fall Guy*, and *Magnum, P.I.*, some of them so slapstick they bordered on comedy. Wildly careening automobiles, a favorite since the days of *Starsky & Hutch* and *The Dukes of Hazzard*, were a favorite device. In *Knight Rider*, the vehicle (a talking Pontiac Trans-Am named KITT) could actually fly through the air. Landings were often hard, but no one ever got hurt.

### The Era of Choice (1990s)

When I first wrote about the (then) “Six Eras of Prime Time” in 1984, it looked as if future updates would be easy. One network would sooner or later stumble upon the next trend, the other two would immediately copy it, and the viewing public would be inundated with clones—the next programming “era.” But it hasn’t worked out that way. Instead, the once tightly controlled world of national television has exploded into hundreds of channels, all with their own independent voices. No longer can three powerful networks dictate what you will see, and no longer does programming move in lockstep. For the first time viewers have a real choice, all the time, and they are using it.

The principal engine of change was cable, a minor force until the early 1980s when changes in government regulations (which had previously protected the broadcast monopoly) ignited rapid growth. By 1987 cable had wired 50 percent of U.S. TV homes, and today “cable networks” can be seen in approximately 87 percent of households, via either cable or satellite. At first the cable networks, lacking the vast financial resources of the entrenched broadcasters, could afford only old movies and reruns of old network shows. But necessity led to ingenuity, resulting in viewing alternatives that the older networks would never provide. There was continuous news (CNN), music (MTV, VH1), documentaries (Discovery), instruction (The Learning Channel, Mind Extension University), cultural programs (A&E, Bravo), and services (The Weather Channel, QVC). Movie channels offered films that were new (HBO), old (AMC), and in between (TNT, TBS, USA). Nickelodeon offered a safe yet exciting environment for kids, while The Family Channel and TNN were built around traditional family values (something the

broadcast networks seemed to care little about). Other entertainment channels were thematic, such as The Sci-Fi Channel and Comedy Central. Rather than copycat programming, cable networks tended to provide something different. When the broadcast networks all flocked to make torn-from-the-headlines “reality” movies, USA Network produced a steady stream of original romantic thrillers, TNT filmed sweeping historical epics such as *Gettysburg* and *Geronimo*, and HBO offered Hollywood-style “events” (*Barbarians at the Gate*, *Stalin*).

As the 1990s dawned, the cable networks expanded into original series in a big way. CNN’s *Larry King Live* was a major force in the 1992 Presidential elections; Nick’s *Double Dare*, *Clarissa Explains It All*, and *Ren and Stimpy* were hits with kids; USA’s *Swamp Thing* and *Ray Bradbury Theater* enthralled sci-fi fans; and MTV mirrored its own restless “MTV generation” with innovative series such as *Liquid TV* and *The Real World*. Later, *Biography*, *Rugrats*, *South Park*, *The Statler Brothers Show*, and *WWF Wrestling* drew big audiences.

Cable was not the only source for new viewing alternatives in the 1990s. Original syndicated series, which bypassed the networks and were sold directly to stations, were booming. There had always been some successful shows of this type, such as *Lawrence Welk* and *Hee Haw*, but a new era began with the fabulously successful *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987)—a franchise which NBC had refused to give a second chance after its original *Star Trek* series in the 1960s. The same network shot itself in the foot again in 1990 when it discarded a lightweight hour called *Baywatch*, only to see it continue in production for syndication and become, reportedly, the most popular TV series in the world. By the 1990s scores of original non-network series filled the early evening, weekend, and (on independent stations) prime-time hours, among them *American Gladiators*, *Arsenio Hall*, *A Current Affair*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Hercules*, *Highlander*, *Renegade*, *Rush Limbaugh*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

The reaction of the three old-line networks to all this new competition was largely business as usual. As the prime-time soap operas faded in the late 1980s, all three turned to reality, in forms as diverse as *America’s Funniest Home Videos*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, and *Rescue 911*. *Roseanne* and *Grace Under Fire* were funny looks at the real-life problems of lower middle-class parents during hard times; *Murphy Brown* welcomed a parade of real-

life newscasters to her fictional newsroom (and took on the real-life Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle, in a debate about the morality of choosing to raise a child alone); *Major Dad* worried about his base being closed due to Pentagon cutbacks. Quirkiness was in (*Northern Exposure*, *Picket Fences*), as were shows about spoiled young singles bonding (*Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Ellen*). Two of the three major networks were now run by bottom-line oriented investors who treated them as mere factories, not show business, leading to a proliferation of low-cost and sometimes sleazy prime-time “news-magazines” which often screamed as loudly as the supermarket tabloids (*Dateline NBC*, *Day One*, *Turning Point*, *48 Hours*, *Primetime Live*, *Street Stories*, *Eye to Eye with Connie Chung*, et al.). Every mass murderer and sexual deviant in America seemed to have his fifteen minutes of fame on these “informational” shows.

Because the older networks steadfastly refused to differentiate themselves, competition even sprang up from new broadcast networks. The first was the hip, racy Fox Network in 1987, which scored hits with several shows the older networks had turned down as too “different” (*Cops*, *Married with Children*). Later, Warner Bros.’ WB Network and Paramount’s UPN launched a mix of prime-time comedy and action serving youth and ethnic minorities.

### The Reality Era (2000s)

As the chaotic '90s, with its mixture of spoiled-singles sitcoms and gritty reality-drama (*ER*, *N.Y.P.D. Blue*, *Law & Order*) wound to an end, network television stumbled on to the “next big thing” in *real* reality shows. Imagine, putting real people on the screen and watching them worry, scheme and sweat! The vanguard of this new wave was the quiz show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* in the late summer of 1999, which reminded networks of the value of audience participation (anyone could get on the show by calling in and taking some tests) and of showing us ourselves on the screen. *Survivor* in 2000 clinched it, with its soap opera backbiting and theatricality as one contestant after another was “voted off the island.” MTV had been doing this sort of thing for youth since *The Real World* premiered in 1992, but now adults discovered it, and a flood of imitators followed.

First there was a wave of stranded-on-the-island (or somewhere) shows, including *Temptation Island*, *Big Brother*, *The Amazing Race* and *The Mole*. Next came the catfights on the romantic “rose ceremony” shows,

kicked off by *The Bachelor* in 2002 and continuing with *The Bachelorette*, *Joe Millionaire* and *Average Joe*. *American Idol* arrived later in 2002 and led to a wave of talent shows including a new *Star Search* and *America’s Most Talented Kid*. The next smash hit was *The Apprentice* (2004), which shifted the setting to the workplace but with no less backbiting. The meanness of many of these shows began to wear thin and by 2005–2006 “nice people can win too” shows such as *Idol*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *Dancing with the Stars* were dominating the ratings. Meanwhile cable had its own strange variations on “reality” ranging from *Jackass* to *Project Runway* and a raft of celebrity-gazing programs (*The Osbournes*, *Anna Nicole*, *Growing Up Gotti* and *Flavor of Love*).

For a time as reality overspread the network schedule cable seemed to be the refuge of scripted drama, with hits like *La Femme Nikita*, *Any Day Now*, *Strong Medicine*, *The Shield*, *Monk*, *Dead Zone*, *The Sopranos* and *The Closer*. But a new wave of drama gained traction on the broadcast networks as well, including *CSI*, *The West Wing*, *The Third Watch* and, in 2004–2005, the huge hits *Desperate Housewives*, *Lost* and *Grey’s Anatomy*. Women became more empowered (*Judging Amy*, *Crossing Jordan*, *Medium*, *Charmed*, anything on Lifetime). Sitcoms were receding, although there was a sub-trend toward slobbish guys with smart, sexy wives, as in *The King of Queens*, *According to Jim*, *Yes Dear* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Youth was served more than ever before, with teen angst on *Dawson’s Creek*, *7th Heaven* and *One Tree Hill* (and, humorously, on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), as well with whole networks like MTV, the Cartoon Network and Comedy Central (where the faux-newscast *The Daily Show* became a prime news source for the younger generation). Kids got cable hits like *The Powerpuff Girls*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Lizzie McGuire* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* Most of the time there are more people watching cable, in aggregate, than are watching the broadcast networks, even though individual broadcast shows draw larger audiences than individual cable shows. A concern is that as niche cable channels are gobbled up by huge entertainment conglomerates their individuality is eliminated in the relentless chase for big, common-denominator audiences. MTV, once a voice for music, becomes “lifestyle”; The Nashville Network, once the voice of the heartland, becomes generic male Spike TV; A&E, once high-tone programming, becomes gimmicky reality; Faith & Values, once a home for reli-

gion, becomes the general entertainment Hallmark Channel; CourtTV, once a window into real trials, becomes generic “crime and punishment”; and so on.

All this choice has not deterred viewers from their time-honored tradition of complaining about TV. However, Bruce Springsteen’s 1992 song “57 Channels (And Nothin’ On)” seems supremely ironic, given the diversity mentioned above; the problem may well be a generation unwilling to give anything more than five seconds of its attention, rather than a lack of quality alternatives. As the authors are acutely aware, as we try to keep up with it all on your behalf, this is television’s Golden Age of Choice.

Over the years America’s love affair with television has matured from initial infatuation to an accepted, and pervasive, part of everyday life. It happened very fast. The per-

centage of U.S. homes with one or more TV sets leaped from 1 percent to 50 percent in five short years (1948–1953), and passed 90 percent in the early 1960s. Today 98 percent of U.S. homes have TV—it is everywhere. And the average home has its set on eight hours a day, every day, watching and recording. You can even catch up on shows on the Internet or on your iPod, representing “personal,” portable TV that many think is the wave of the future. The explosion in cable channels has only added to the enormous variety of programs available.

As for the programs we’ve watched, they’re all in these pages. Leaf through the book, guided perhaps by the year-by-year network schedules and top program rankings in the back. A panorama of the series and the stars who captivated America for 60-plus years is on display.