The American Television Industry (International Screen Industries)

Michael Curtin, Jane Shattuc

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The American Television Industry (International Screen Industries) Michael Curtin, Jane Shattuc In an age of proliferating choices, television nevertheless remains the most popular medium in the United States. Americans spend more time with TV than ever before, and many 'new media' forms, such as blu-ray movies, Hulu videos, and Internet widgets, are produced and delivered by the world's most lucrative and powerful television industry. Yet that industry has undergone profound changes since the 1980s, moving from a three-network oligopoly to a sprawling range of channels and services dominated by a handful of major conglomerates. Viewers can now access hundreds of channels at all hours of the day and can search and select from hundreds of thousands of individual programmes on video and Internet services. This diversity has fragmented the size of television audiences and transformed relationships between viewers and television companies. Unlike the first fifty years of television, today's industry leaders can no longer rely on mass audiences and steady revenue flows from big-budget advertisers, and this in turn affects their programming and production strategies.

The American Television Industry offers a concise and accessible introduction to TV production, programming, advertising and distribution. Michael Curtin and Jane Shattuc outline how programmes are made and marketed, and provide an insightful overview of key players, practices and future trends. Although star-driven dramas and comedies continue to attract a great deal of critical praise and audience attention, television is increasingly characterised by niche programming services, that, with modest production budgets, compete for audience attention. In this environment, reality TV genres have emerged as attractive programming alternatives for cable services such as the History Channel and the Food Network. Moreover, programming is increasingly delivered on an a la carte, on-demand basis to a diverse array of viewing devices, such as iPods and cell phones.

The book analyses the corporate strategies, technological innovations and cultural transformations that have driven changes in industry strategy, discourse and practice. Making reference to numerous case examples, the authors identify definitive trends and describe key players in industry and government. These are indeed vibrant but unstable times for the American television industry and this volume explains the major forces that will shape the future of the medium in North America and around the world.

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