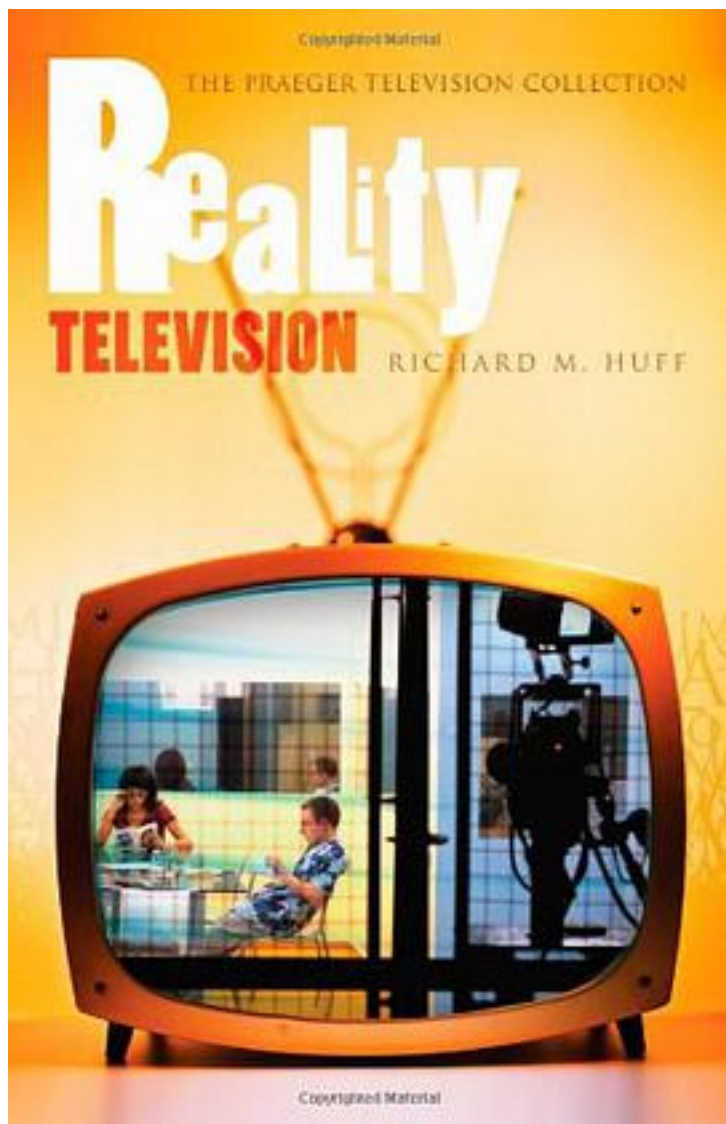


Reality Television



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Reality programming - a broad title for unscripted shows that involve non-actors - is really an updated version of a classic television genre that had its first successes decades before "The Real World" or "Survivor" made their premieres. NBC launched "Try and Do It" in 1949, a show in which audience members attempted to complete tasks such as whistling with a mouthful of crackers, or lacing up a left shoe on one's right foot; and in the 1950s "Queen for a Day" crowned the most down-trodden of its four contestants, draping her in a sable-trimmed robe and granting a previously declared wish as the prize. The wild success that reality television has achieved of late has pushed the envelope of such programming ever further ahead, and ever further away from the genre's innocuous beginnings. This book provides a look back on how this genre has developed, what it reveals to us about ourselves, and what has transformed it into one of the most powerful forms of entertainment on television today. Using interviews with network insiders, reality producers, and other experts, Richard Huff supplies fascinating insights into the diverse content and often erratic development of reality television programming, and further augments this information with illuminating general connections between the past and present forms and styles that these shows assume. From "Queen for a Day" through "Extreme Makeover," from "Cops" to "Fear Factor," the whole genre is placed before us in this exhaustive and many-sided account, which uncovers the past foundations and future potential of the compelling and dominating phenomenon that is reality television.

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