

Reality TV



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The Apprentice. Project Runway. The Bachelor. My Life on the D-list. Extreme Makeover. American Idol. It is virtually impossible to turn on a television without coming across some sort of reality programming. Yet, while this genre has rapidly moved from the fringes of television culture to its lucrative core, critical attention has not kept pace. Beginning by unearthing its historical roots in early reality shows like Candid Camera and wending its way through An American Family and The Real World to the most recent crop of reality programs, Reality TV, now updated with eight new essays, is one of the first books to address the economic, visual, cultural, audience, and new media dimensions of reality television and has become the standard in the field. The essays provide a complex and comprehensive picture of how and why this genre emerged, what it means, how it differs from earlier television programming, and how it engages societies, industries, and individuals. Topics range from the blending of fact and fiction, to the uses of viewer labour and interactivity, to issues of surveillance, gender performativity, hyper-commercialism, and generic parody. By spanning reality television's origins in the late 1940s to its current overwhelming popularity, Reality TV demonstrates both the tenacity of the format and its enduring ability to speak to our changing political and social desires and anxieties.

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