



Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio : Raising Standards of Popular Culture

Steve Allen

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As a key player in the creative excellence that made TV's Golden Age so memorable, Steve Allen is disgusted and outraged by what he sees on television today. Whereas talent and quality were the benchmarks of the early years of television and radio, pandering to the lowest common denominator in pursuit of advertising dollars and audience share is the main focus of today's programmers and performers.

More disturbing than the issue of artistic quality is the effect that such low cultural standards are having on our children. Every day America's youth is being exposed to hideously inappropriate speech and behavior by role models in TV, film, radio, and the music industry. Concern about this crass promotion of sexuality and violence to children is not just an obsession of the religious right. A growing number of people in the entertainment industry, as well as citizens from all walks of life, are disturbed by the coarsening of American entertainment with its glorification of violence and casual, no-consequences sex.

To fight this slide toward Gomorrah a campaign called "The Parents Television Council" has been launched, the goal of which is to improve the quality of television and all other facets of the entertainment industry. As honorary chairman, Steve Allen describes not only what the council is doing to raise our cultural standards, but more importantly what all concerned citizens can do to help. Allen argues against complacency; adults may ignore the content of television programming and other entertainment, but children are certainly paying attention and imbibing the not-so-subtle violent and sexually charged messages.

The question, says Allen, is: What kind of a society will we bequeath to our children, one dominated by media conglomerates that push anything for a quick buck, or one that reflects the highest standards of our heritage? It's up to us to do something about it, to raise a chorus of protest that echoes the words of the TV anchorman from Network, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

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