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By Janet Staiger

New York University Press, United States, 2001. Paperback. Condition: New. New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Archie Bunker. Jed. Laverne and Shirley. Cliff Huxtable. Throughout the entire history of American prime-time television only four sitcoms have been true blockbusters, with Nielsen ratings far above the second- and third-rated programs. Weekly, millions of Americans of every age were making a special effort to turn on the set to see what Archie, Jed, Laverne, and Cliff were doing that week. The wild popularity of these shows--All in the Family, The Beverly Hillbillies, Laverne Shirley (and its partner Happy Days), and The Cosby Show--left commentators bewildered by the tastes and preferences of the American public. How do we account for the huge appeal of these sitcoms, and how does it figure into the history of network prime-time television? Janet Staiger answers these questions by detailing the myriad factors that go into the construction of mass audiences. Treating the four shows as case studies, she deftly balances factual explanations (for instance, the impact of VCRs and cable on network domination of TV) with more interpretative ones (for example, the transformation of The Beverly Hillbillies from a popular show detested by the critics, to...

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