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# Dictionary of Teleliteracy: Television's 500 Biggest Hits, Misses, and Events

*David Bianculli*

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**David Bianculli : Dictionary of Teleliteracy: Television's 500 Biggest Hits, Misses, and Events** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dictionary of Teleliteracy: Television's 500 Biggest Hits, Misses, and Events:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A book that even tel-illiterates will want to read! By ArkentIt's a shame this book has such a dull title because it's really a wonderful book! I have several shelves filled with television reference books, but this one takes pride of place. True to its title, the book is organized in the form of a dictionary, with A to Z entries on individual shows, from "ABC World News" to "Zorro." Not only is it stuffed with useful information on the history of television from 1945 through 1995, it's great fun to read. David Bianculli is that rarest of all TV addicts--a man with an IQ number higher than the number of cable channels he gets. He seems to know everything there is to know about every show ever aired and can comment authoritatively on all of them. Here he has selected 500 programs (both series and individual events, such as the O.J. Simpson "Bronco" miniseries) that have had the greatest impact--for better or for worse--on our culture and explains why. All this has to do with his conception of "teleliteracy"--the awareness and appreciation of TV's most popular and meaningful offerings. In other words, this book isn't strictly about the best and worst in television history (though Bianculli offers tons of examples of both), it's about the shows that have made the greatest impression on our consciousness--the shows that live on our memories, that

have changed our language, and have shaped our culture. 8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A dog of a book; a huge disappointment  
By Tony McBeth (HbgEagle@aol.com) Perhaps I expected too much from this book. I had thought it would be a valuable reference for anyone who appreciates television and its history. Instead, the book is aimless drivel about nothing but the author's own opinions, not to mention his revolting and juvenile puns, appearing seemingly on every other line.  
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent  
By walter gibson Mr. Bianculli is a fun read and clearly a master of his domain. This book is a must have for any television fan or student. Keep it by the TV set and beat your family members in trivia contests. Run don't walk to pick up a copy.

This A-Z guide examines the impact of American prime-time network TV shows from 1948 to 1994, many of which reached the UK and Europe. It includes: 1950s - I Love Lucy; 1960s - The Addams Family; 1970s - M.A.S.H., Happy Days; 1980s - Dallas, Dynasty; 1990s - The Oprah Winfrey Show.

From Library Journal The idea of compiling the 500 biggest television shows is unique?but is it necessary? Bianculli, a New York Daily News writer and NPR TV reviewer, aims to present the most meaningful and popular events and shows from television history, but he concedes that the selections are subjective and hardly exhaustive. They do cover a wide spectrum of television history, however, and highlights or unique plot twists are mentioned. The selections include news events (the O.J. Simpson low-speed chase), mini-series (Rich Man, Poor Man), classic TV shows (The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis), sitcoms (Newhart), dramas (The Waltons), game shows (Jeopardy!), and even foreign television shows (Absolutely Fabulous). Bianculli offers lengthy commentary on each show or event, but one looks in vain for a straightforward cast list at the end of each selection (though cast members are sometimes mentioned). If you need to add an up-to-date television history for browsing to your collection, consider this book, but if you are looking for a good TV reference, check out Alex MacNeil's Total Television: The Comprehensive Guide to Programming from 1948 to the Present (Penguin, 1995).  
?Judy Hauser, Oakland Schls. Lib. Svces., Waterford, Mich. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Booklist The launch of Nickelodeon's new cable channel, TV-Land, makes this a very timely book. Many of its subjects can be seen on either TV-Land or Nick at Nite, which this work frequently mentions. This book's subtitle defines its subject quite well, and the author, a TV critic for the New York Daily News, approaches his topic with passion, humor, and terrible puns. Bianculli begins by noting that this is a companion volume to his 1992 book, Teleliteracy: Taking Television Seriously (Continuum). What is lacking in this new book, though, is a suitable definition of teleliteracy that would allow it to stand alone. The author uses the word a great deal, leaving the reader with the implication that the shows are those that have entered the American collective memory. Arranged alphabetically, the subjects range from news (the coverage of the Kennedy assassination, the moon landing, the O.J. Simpson trial) to American television icons (MASH, Dallas, The Honeymooners) and British imports (Doctor Who, Fawlty Towers, Monty Python's Flying Circus). The author has chosen what he feels are "the most memorable" programs of postwar American TV. "Most memorable," he notes, does not necessarily mean good. For the most part, the annotations note what channel or network originally carried the show and the years in which it originally ran. For British imports, he notes when they first ran in America. His sometimes humorous annotations present information on the show, and also his own choices of the best and the worst of the episodes. There is no consistent use of plot synopses, but complementary publications, such as The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows (5th ed., Ballantine, 1992) or Total Television (3d ed., Penguin, 1991), have covered this. The author's opening remarks for his Star Trek entry ("Yeah, like America needs more words written about Star Trek" ) could be used for almost any entry. Though it lacks a suitable method of cross-referencing, this book is wonderfully nostalgic reading. With its 1992 companion volume, it will provide any collection with an interesting examination of the cultural significance of TV in America.