

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

Televisuality

JOHN T CALDWELL

"This may be the most sophisticated study of the American television medium, industry, and aesthetic to date. Caldwell ranges through industry bumf and the academic bibliography to rescue the medium from theoretical simplifications. [An] insightful and allusive text that leaves virtually no familiar generalization unchallenged."

—*Choice*, Outstanding Academic Title

"An original and outstanding contribution to television scholarship.... Illuminating both in its examination of television at a specific historical moment and in challenging common academic conceptions about the medium for their failure to engage with the historical changes in television production."

—Allan D. Campbell, *Velvet Light Trap*

"[A] well-researched volume."

—*Library Journal*

"With its combined attention to television aesthetic, economic, and technological aspects, it [is] a highly innovative book that question[s] a great deal of conventional wisdom."

—*European Journal of Media Studies*

"Engrossing and thought-provoking.... *Televisuality* points to a hole in television studies and highlights an interdisciplinary approach—combining the economic with the aesthetic and ideological—that could help to plug it."

—Matthew P. McAllister, *Film Quarterly*

Although the "decline" of network television in the face of cable programming was an institutional crisis of television history, John Caldwell's classic volume *Televisuality* reveals that this decline spawned a flurry of new production initiatives to reassert network authority. Television in the 1980s hyped an extensive array of exhibitionist practices to raise the prime-time marquee above the multi-channel flow. *Televisuality* demonstrates the cultural logic of stylistic exhibitionism in everything from prestige series (*Northern Exposure*) and "loss-leader" event-status programming (*War and Remembrance*) to lower "trash" and "tabloid" forms (*Pee-wee's Playhouse* and reality TV). Caldwell shows how "import-auteurs" like Oliver Stone and David Lynch were stylized for prime time as videographics packaged and tamed crisis news coverage. By drawing on production experience and critical and cultural analysis, and by tying technologies to aesthetics and ideology, *Televisuality* is a powerful call for desegregation of theory and practice in media scholarship and an end to the willful blindness of "high theory."

JOHN THORNTON CALDWELL teaches in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at the University of California, Los Angeles. His work has been published in *Cinema Journal* and *American Television*, broadcast on PBS, and screened in festivals in Berlin, Paris, and Amsterdam.

Rutgers University Press Classics

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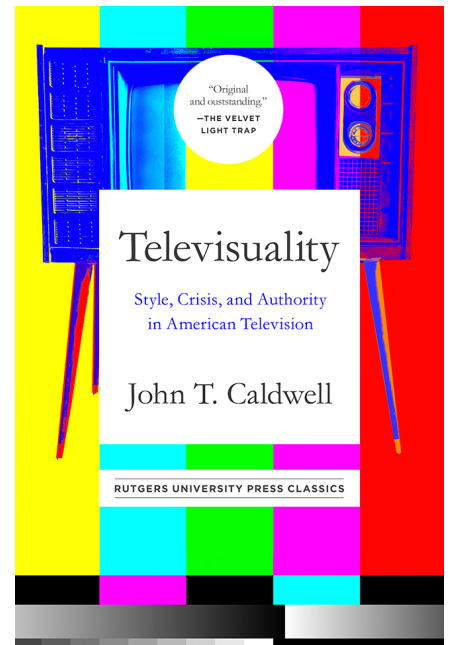
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696 pp 6 x 9

978-1-9788-1603-9 paper \$41.95T **\$29.36**

978-1-9788-1621-3 cloth \$150.00SU **\$105.00**

August 2020

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