



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

*By Steve Allen*

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### **Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio : Raising Standards of Popular Culture By Steve Allen**

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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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

At the forefront of television's Golden Age in the 1950s, Allen reigned for decades as a top TV comedian. However, his serious side has always been evident in his 54 books from his autobiographical *Mark It and Strike It* (1960) to *Ripoff: The Corruption That Plagues America* (1979). In recent years, Allen became increasingly disturbed by the entertainment industry's declining cultural standards and "the general ugliness and immorality of much of popular culture." He made his position clear in letters, lectures and articles and by serving as the honorary chairman of the 600,000-member Parents Television Council. Here, he conducts an "admittedly unscientific study of modern television programming," yet offers an array of statistics, survey findings and clippings to back up his assertions targeting TV writers, programmers, performers, network executives and corporate giants. Tracing a pattern of denial, he moves on to "late night raunch," public-access channels ("actual pornography of the most explicit sort"), "family-friendly" sponsors responsible for sending prime-time "depravity into the home" and violence in children's programming. At the core of the book are lengthy attacks on Madonna, Howard Stern, Jerry Springer and rap music. Dismissing "the suggestion that networks can police themselves," he concludes by surveying such solutions as letters, picketing, boycotts and religion. An appendix lists 21 key organizations. (Apr. 15)Forecast: Allen undoubtedly would have promoted this book had he lived to see it published (he died last October at age 78). Still, his name and credibility will attract attention. Current controversies on media sex and violence could put this title in the spotlight, and word-of-mouth among members of conservative organizations like the Dove Foundation will fuel sales.

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### Review

"...Allen brings a fine sense of outrage to the subject." -- *The New York Times*, August 25, 2001

"...a nice companion piece to Allen's bestseller, *DUMBTH...*" -- *Orlando Sentinel*, June 10, 2001

"...articulate indictment of the entertainment industry...he encourages Americans to let their voices be heard...and to be proactive" -- *Christianity Today*, July 9, 2001

"...one can't deny his central theme that there has been an erosion in the standards of popular entertainment." -- *San Diego Union Tribune*, December 21, 2001

"A survival manual for adults trying to cope with the media's saturation bombing of their children with images and words of violence and sex." -- *The Buffalo News*, Sunday, April 15, 2001

"You may not agree with him--but you must admit his arguments are well-reasoned and entirely thought-provoking." -- *Bookloons.com*

### About the Author

**Steve Allen** (1921-2000) was known as television's renaissance man. He authored more than fifty books and composed over 8,500 songs. Allen was the creator and original host of the *Tonight Show* and the award-winning PBS series *Meeting of Minds*. You can learn more about this legendary entertainer by visiting his

official Web site at [SteveAllenonline.com](http://SteveAllenonline.com).

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