

Early Television

In 1939, the first television sets became available to American consumers. Only a few decades later, television's stylistic conventions have become a very familiar, virtually omnipresent part of the American cultural landscape. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the language of television was still being invented. Inspiration came from a variety of sources. Comedy programs such as "The Jack Benny Show" and "The Goldbergs," dramatic anthologies such as "Kraft Television Theater," quiz shows such as "Name That Tune," and variety programs such as "Arthur Godfrey and His Friends" borrowed heavily from popular radio formats. Other early programming addressed the medium's place in the home. "Photographic Horizons," for example, posed models for viewers to photograph off the television screen. Still other early television programs self-consciously experimented with the expressive capabilities of the medium itself. Certain special effects on "The Ernie Kovacs Show," for example, drew the audience's attention to both the limitations and the possibilities of early studio equipment.

With the occasional exception of shows such as "Garroway at Large" (which was produced in Chicago) and "Dragnet" (which was filmed in Hollywood), early network television emanated from the studios of CBS, NBC and ABC in



Television pioneer Milton Berle (left) was a prominent figure in early television broadcasts. Mr. Berle is shown above with performer Danny Thomas.

New York. Until 1955, the DuMont Television Network also broadcast to a number of cities across the US, including Los Angeles.

The UCLA Film & Television Archive has an extensive collection of early television programming. In addition to network programming, the Archive's DuMont holdings include "Calvacade of Stars"—which introduced Jackie Gleason's "The Honeymooners"—

and "Captain Video," television's first science-fiction program. The Archive also maintains a large collection of local television programs such as "Help Thy Neighbor," a call-in show for Angelinos down on their luck, and "The Continental," which featured a host who addressed his audience as if they were in-house drinking guests.

SAMPLES FROM THE ARCHIVE

Photographic Horizons (1948-11-10). DuMont. Study Copy: VA8230 T

Captain Video (1949). DuMont. Director, Larry White. Writer, M.C. Brock. Study Copy: VA12299 T

Kukla, Fran & Ollie. Homecoming (1949). NBC. Producer, Beulah Zachary. Director, Lewis Gomavit. Study Copy: VA9 T

The Goldbergs (1949-08-29). CBS. Study Copy: VA5765 T

Texaco Star Theater (1949-11-22). NBC. Host: Milton Berle. Study Copy: VA2595 T

Cavalcade of Stars (1950-09-02). DuMont. Producer, Milton Douglas. Study Copy: VA2200 T

Your Show of Shows (1951-11-10). NBC. Producer, Max Liebman. Cast, Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Carl Reiner, Jack Russell and James Starbuck. Study Copy: VA9828 T

The Dinah Shore Show. Premiere (1951-11-27). NBC. Producer, Director, Writer, Alan Handley. Study Copy: VA2617 T

Philco Television Playhouse. Holiday Song (1952-09-14). NBC. Producer, Fred Coe. Director, Gordon Duff. Writer, Paddy Chayefsky. Study Copy: VA3181 T

Goodyear Television Playhouse. Other People's Houses (1953-08-30). NBC. Producer, David Susskind. Director, William Corrigan. Writer, Tad Mosel. Study Copy: VA2114 T

Studio One. Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners (1954-01-11). CBS. Writer, Reginald Rose. Study Copy: VA11347 T

See it Now. Report on Joseph R. McCarthy (1954-03-09). CBS. Reported by Edward R. Murrow. Study Copy: VA926 T

Kraft Television Theatre. Patterns (1955-02-09). NBC. Director, Producer, Fielder Cook. Writer, Rod Serling. Study Copy: VA116 T.

The Honeymooners. TV or not TV (1955-10-01). CBS. Director, Frank Satenstein. Writers, Marvin Marx and Walter Stone. Study Copy: VA6035 T

The Ernie Kovacs Show (1956-04-11). Study Copy: VA5081 T

Playhouse 90. Requiem for a Heavyweight (1956-10-11). CBS. Producer, Martin Manulis. Director, Ralph Nelson. Writer, Rod Serling. Study Copy: VA1358 T

PRINT RESOURCES

(for more information consult the UCLA Libraries Collection)

Kisseloff, Jeff. *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961*. New York: Viking, 1995.

The Days of Live: Television's Golden Age as seen by 21 Directors Guild of America Members. Ira Skutch, ed. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998.