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Reality TV: An Insider's Guide To TV's Hottest Market



Synopsis

Want to know more about the real realities of reality television? *Reality TV: An Insider's Guide to TV's Hottest Market* lays them all out in this engaging read from a working producer with more than a decade's worth of experience in bringing top reality shows to life. While many other books on the subject focus solely on creating and selling shows (and don't worry... that's all here, too), reality producer Troy DeVold's book aims instead to become the definitive primer on storytelling in the genre. *Reality TV: An Insider's Guide to TV's Hottest Market* is a no-nonsense read that doesn't sugarcoat the realities of the process or the ethical gut-checks that writers and producers often experience in trying to deliver an engaging end product. Written in an easygoing, conversational style, the book explains the history of reality TV and its process from preproduction through post, also providing real, applicable information on beginning your career as a writer/producer of reality content. The book demystifies the process in a way that should appeal to media students and educators (each chapter ending in useful exercises), casually interested fans, or writers looking to broaden their existing skill set.

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Customer Reviews

"If you want to work in Reality TV or create your own Reality show, you need to read this book first."

- Andy Dehnart, RealityBlurred.com"Reality TV

I've worked in Reality TV for more than ten years on dozens of shows, always making a point of sharing my experiences (well, as much as I'm allowed to) with students, educators, and interested

outsiders. This book was born out of my long-standing frustration with the lack of reliable reads on the subject of producing the stuff. Be honest. Do you know much about the real inner workings of Reality TV? How can a genre evolve and improve when so few great storytellers have any idea that it's as viable a career option as any other in entertainment? While there are countless books on the process of writing screenplays and traditionally scripted television programming, most of the reads on Reality TV that I had found offered advice on getting cast or creating and selling original shows, virtually ignoring the storytelling process and utterly failing to establish the basics of maintaining a career as an employable reality professional. With the help of the great folks at MWP and many of the most experienced story producers, editors and execs in the business, Reality TV: An Insider's Guide to Reality Television now exists as what I hope will become the definitive book on cracking the genre, developing your ability to tell better stories, and revealing just how much fun you can have along the way. Of course, if you're a die-hard fan who just wants a fun and sometimes funny peek behind the curtain of Reality TV, that's okay, too.

I bought this book first prior to related books because it is the newest and I believe the hottest TV trends are time-sensitive. If you consider television show evolution you will notice what I mean and Devolld, the author, describes reality TV as it involves lower production costs. The content length is almost enough because it is not filled with fluff and irrelevant anecdotes which other books of 300 pages contain. However, I think it could do without the appendix A, C, D because they cover general filming tips. Instead it could be replaced with specific challenges breaking into reality TV. Devolld's sincere writing is well organized and grabs your attention with occasional clues of "insider" details. Don't get too excited because simultaneously, he also states he will not and does not tell secrets because of his non-disclosure agreements about productions. This is why I have to reduce the rating by one star. Even though I respect the author's honesty and integrity, I believe he could have included more breakthrough tips to help amateurs make it in the industry, instead he suggests the reader to buy a different book not only once but twice. What is lacking of industry secrets, is replaced by Devolld's common networking tips such as getting entry-level jobs and starting work early, where you can get access to the decision makers. This isn't practical for enthusiasts who already have money or well paying jobs, but want to reach out to executive producers for a co-production opportunity. I have yet to try this, but the author recommends several websites which provide contact information for production companies. Getting an email response from an executive producer is yet another challenge. More helpful advice is written about story telling and dealing with cast members. According to Devolld, the production of reality TV is volatile to the point where staff titles

are confusing and overlapping of responsibilities. Yet this results in lower production costs because stories can change and cast members are "expendable". In entrepreneurial business, these concepts are akin to a lean startup. There are rather shocking examples of bad outcomes for cast members caused by reality TV such as suicides. Like any other industry, there are respectful and ruthless employers to work for. Devolld touches on this topic and recommends rejecting any job that may seem harmful to your reputation, because a better opportunity may be right around the corner. As far as success goes, the book includes writers' salary for reality TV which can be around \$3,600/week. I didn't expect this looking at the table of contents and nothing more is explained about numbers (income). I can understand that money shouldn't be a motivator for someone trying to produce a show, but I believe salaries can be better described since there's a wide range of possible income in TV production. To summarize this is great handbook for beginners and amateurs attempting to work for the reality TV niche with sound advice and examples of responsibilities from the production team.

I'll be honest, I am not the type person who thoroughly enjoys 'Reality' programming. I'll watch the occasional travel doc or cooking program that suits to my liking, but the aura of authenticity that surrounds most shows will always create boundaries between us. That being said, Troy DeVold's book on the making of these types of programs is a fantastic and surprising read. Instead of approaching this with the 'Ticket to Instant Stardom' method you'd normally expect, Troy actually focuses his attention on the obstacles he normally faces as one who transforms hours of footage into a structured story for television. As a Behind-The-Scenes nut, I particularly enjoyed the chapters on the assembly of footage into story arcs, along with the breakdown of cast interviews. While this book did not convert me into a 'Reality TV' buff, it did bring about an appreciation into the making of such programs I thought I would never gain from reading the book. This book is mostly for those who either really enjoy these types of programs and want that rare behind the scenes glimpse, or for those who want to be in charge of making of them.

I already work in reality TV as a story producer. I got this book out of curiosity and I really enjoyed it. There aren't really any schools where you can learn about working in this field, it's kind of a bastard step child of "real TV shows". So learning happens mostly on the fly, and those who are able to pick things up on the job do pretty well. At least, that's how it's gone for me. Since my knowledge is all based on experience I sometimes wonder if I've missed some stuff. This book helped confirm for me what I've learned, filled in a few gaps and was a good, fast paced read. This season I've been

paired with someone who was promoted from exec. asst. to story editor, so there's a lot of learning he missed by not working his way up the ranks. I gave him this book to help get him up to speed. I think it's the perfect tool to teach someone what they need to know to be doing our jobs. And there are pictures in there of people I've worked with, which was fun. It really is a very small world.

It is refreshing to not only be informed but to be so informed without the air of smug disdain. I was continuing to read as if talking to a long time friend or coworker. It is great to be able to learn from someone who does not think of themselves as too good. Troy continued to not only write eloquently and truthfully but wrote with a voice of tenderness and respect that makes you want to take him to dinner and talk his ear off. If you have any interest in Reality TV whatsoever this is a book for you.

It's pretty simple really - this is the best book about reality tv on the market. If you have an interest in producing it or being involved with it, you need it. Troy is a guru and he explains some very complicated topics in a clear, conversational tone. With expert quick tips and plenty of insights, this book is brilliant. I've spent plenty of time working in the documentary world, and this book has acted as a perfect bridge between my understanding and the nature of the reality tv industry. I've learnt so much from this book that I now have confidence to try and enter this notoriously tight-lipped industry.

Troy DeVold knows exactly what he's talking about as one of the top executive producers in the reality television field. He's also a seasoned comedy writer, so this is not only a MUST READ for professionals, but a fun read. Simply stated, this is the best resource for anyone going into the reality field, or anyone interested in working in TV. Highly informative as well as an entertaining read. Kudos, Troy DeVold, for writing the definitive book on the field.

Though some of the earlier chapters seemed like stating the obvious, regarding the "reality" of reality television and reality show formats, the content about the various players, their roles, and business considerations were very informative and helpful. Who knows? Maybe I'll be working with Mr. DeVold one day.

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