



WORLD USA COMMENTARY WORK & MONEY LEARNING LIVING SCI / TECH ARTS & LEISURE BOOKS TF

Home

About Us/Help | Archive | Subscribe | Feedback | Text Edition | MonitorTalk | Search:



Graduate Schools
Online Programs
 Get [real world skills](#)
 from industry experts



Commentary > John Hughes
from the May 28, 2003 edition

Is Hollywood getting the message?

By John Hughes

SALT LAKE CITY – A new report by a TV watchdog group says the major broadcast networks - ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox - are showing less sexual content, particularly during the first two hours of prime time when children might be viewing.

On the face of things, that sounds good. We must welcome any dent in the torrent of porn that Hollywood has been imposing on us.

The Parents Television Council (PTC), which advocates less sex and violence on TV, sees some hope in the report it issued last week. It says that with the increased visibility of raunchy reality series, envelope-pushing dramas, and smutty sitcoms, the common perception is that television is getting filthier. But on closer inspection, says the PTC, "There does seem to be very real improvement here and there."

So it ponders whether "Hollywood is finally starting to listen to what the market wants."

Well, let's hope so.

My own scanning of the early evening network shows does not fill me with much confidence. There are still too many TV producers and directors straining to push the envelope rather than heeding the complaints of parents whose children are being force-fed smut.

The PTC survey covers only the networks, not the vast new world

THE MONITOR'S VIEW

OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REGULAR COLUMNISTS:

- [Dante Chinni](#)
- [John Hughes](#)
- [Daniel Schorr](#)
- [Jeffrey Shaffer](#)
- [Godfrey Sperling](#)

Other columnists:

- [Patrick Chisholm](#)
- [Jeremy Dauber](#)
- [Helena Cobban](#)
- [Marilyn Gardner](#)
- [John Gould](#)
- [Pat M. Holt](#)
- [The Family Guy](#)
- [My American experience](#)

Sci/Tech columnists:

- [Jim Regan](#)
Site Reviews
- [Michelle Thaller](#)
Science Tidbits
- [Monitorblog](#)
A weblog about technology and its impact on our lives.
- [Liblog](#)
Our staff librarians' weblog about informative and interesting web sites

Commentary Stories:

for 05/28/2003

SUPPORT

→ [Make a c](#)

MONIT

Purchase of the [Monito](#) as little as

TREELE

New! Su
Treele



SUB

Subscribe

[Free samp](#)

E-mail He
Enter your receive ne

SCHOOL

[Program:](#)
[anc](#)



- [Parsing a Tax Cut's Benefits](#)
- [Gun Loopholes and Terror](#)
- [Is Hollywood getting the message?](#)
- [War ends, but Iraq battle over small arms just begins](#)
- [Sometimes waiting is its own adventure](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)

XML [What is this?](#)

Most-viewed stories:
(for 05/27/03)

- 05/23/03
[Artificial black holes: on the threshold of new physics](#)
- 05/28/03
[US weighs a tougher Iran stance](#)
- 05/27/03
['Lone wolves' pose explosive terror threat](#)
- 05/27/03
[How hard will Bush push for Mideast peace?](#)
- 05/28/03
[Mt. Everest's quiet conquerors: the Sherpas of Nepal](#)

of cable, and not even all the networks get a nod of approval. The WB and UPN networks, says PTC, still carry as much sexual content as ever during the family hour of 8 to 9 p.m.

Nor can we be certain that there is a real change of heart and stirring of conscience even at the networks where sexual content is down. CBS spokesman Chris Ender told the Associated Press that there is no explanation for the dip at his network. And, Mr. Ender delivered an astounding statement: "Chastity is not a strategy at CBS."

Does this mean that promotion of premarital sex, extramarital sex, and a general disregard for moral values is CBS strategy?

Meanwhile, if some of the networks are, for reasons unclear to them, running less prime-time material offensive to many of their viewers, there remains the proliferation of cable TV and a lot of movies and a lot of modern music lyrics, where the enthusiasm for offering sensitivity-jarring sex and violence by sight or sound remains horrendous.

The good news is that a viewer revolt against sexual content on TV may be gaining steam. Even as the PTC survey became public, a new group called Common Sense Media made its debut, dedicated to pressuring the big entertainment companies to be more responsive to parents' concerns. Its founder, James P. Steyer, told The New York Times: "We want to create a huge constituency for parents and kids in the same way that Mothers Against Drunk Driving or the AARP [American Association of Retired Persons] has done. We can pressure the media industry itself, and the now completely dormant Federal Communications Commission."

The group reportedly has an initial funding of \$500,000 and its backers include Charles R. Schwab, the brokerage company chief, and Philip F. Anschutz, the founder of Qwest Communications International. The aim is to introduce a Web-based media-ratings system that would rank entertainment products on the basis of bad language, sexual content, and adult themes. Users of the website will be asked to enroll as members for a suggested donation of \$25. Two former FCC chairmen, William E. Kennard and Newton N. Minow, sit on the board of the new entity.

As the Kaiser Family Foundation reported in its own survey of sex on TV earlier this year, one of the toughest challenges of being a teenager in America today is making healthy choices about sex. If the culture is saturated with sexual imagery, that challenge is greater than ever.

When the Kaiser Foundation asked teens what role sex on TV played in their own lives, nearly three-fourths said it influenced the sexual behavior of children their age, and one-fourth admitted it influenced their own behavior.

That influence is not benign. Kaiser reported that by the time they graduate from high school, two-thirds of the nation's teens are



GET DEGI AS LIT

MOI



100% DEC

MBA, Techni Manag

MS, Infr Techni

BS, Infr Techni

AA, B Admin



having sex. Half of all new HIV infections occur among people under age 25.

Last week the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy reported that 20 percent of adolescents have had sexual intercourse before their 15th birthday. One in seven of the sexually experienced 14-year-old girls has been pregnant.

Too bad some TV executives think that for them "chastity is not a strategy."

• *John Hughes is a former editor of the Monitor who won a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting.*

.....

			
E-mail this story	Write a letter to the Editor	Printer-friendly version	Permission to reprint/republish

.....

[back to top](#)

[Home](#) | [About Us/Help](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Archive](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Site Map](#) | [MonitorTalk](#) | [Special Features](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights & Permissions](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Today's Article on Christian Science](#) | [Web](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2003 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.