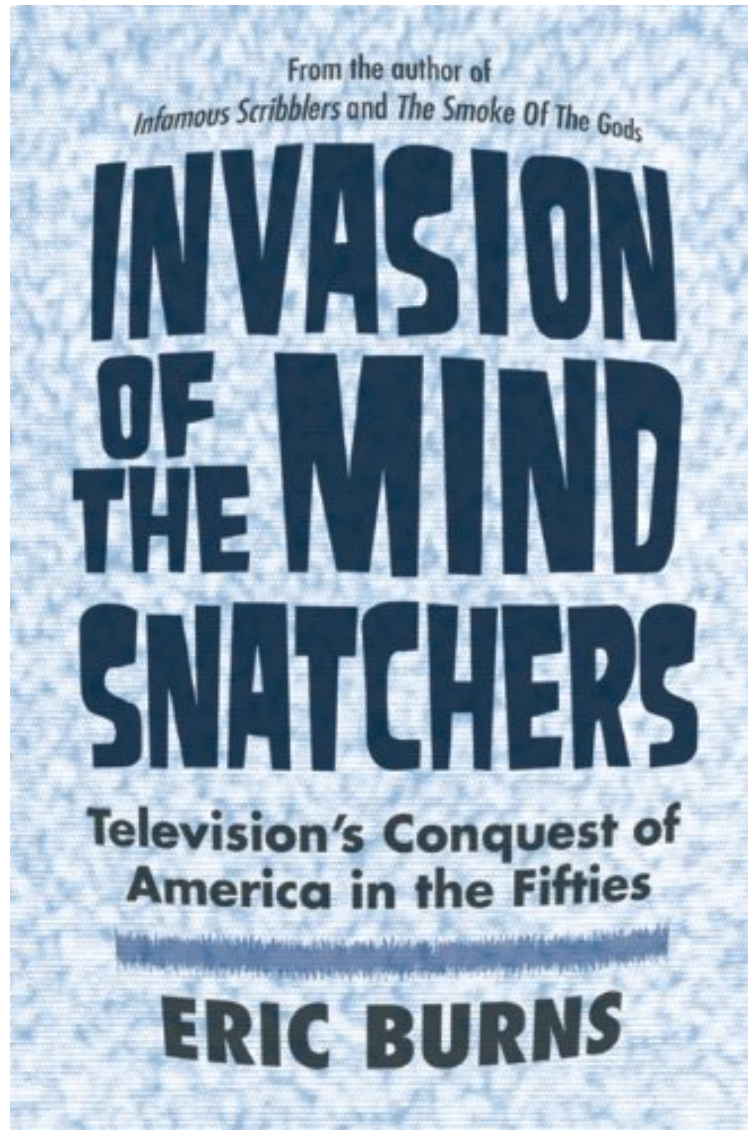


(Free) Invasion of the Mind Snatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties

## **Invasion of the Mind Snatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties**

*Eric Burns*

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**Eric Burns : Invasion of the Mind Snatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Invasion of the Mind Snatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy R. Montrosean interesting story on the hold that television has and still has on society.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great ReadBy ReviewerBurns captures the spirit of the era. His writing is witty and sharp and the depth of his research is evident on every page.

Through wonderful anecdotes he tells the tale of TV's effect on America in its first major decade. It's a story that's all the more resonant for being told now -- while our country attempts to discern how the Internet has changed it in the preceding decade. Some of the stories have the "Pleasantville"-like charms of '50s nostalgia; others are more chilling (this was, after all, the decade when gas companies had the word "gas" excised from a program on the Nuremberg trials and when McCarthy was harassing most of the media Burns so deftly portrays). All in all, you will be engrossed by this trip through a decade and its mythmaking. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The medium is the message. By wogan Television is perhaps one of the most widely addictive things in modern life. Eric Burns describes the beginnings of TV from its invention to its acceptance today; but mainly delving into its early stages in the 50's and how it changed American culture and family life. It is written in an interesting style and whether you grew up with television or are of the younger generation it makes for fascinating reading. The problems and complaints of lessening physical activity is well covered. There are many thoughts given by 'authorities' regarding this new product; they vary from; it knit families closer together, improved moral standards, to the descriptions of how viewers would believe anything they saw or heard on their TV set - where the same type of humor would just have been amusing on a radio. All the changes in life are described, TV dinners and alterations in meal times and school work given by teachers is analyzed. The comparisons between movie and TV stars is well done, how the fans and even Hollywood treated each in a different fashion. Interesting observations are made about how the men who served in WWII and their families needed to get their minds off of the past and television gave them a much needed respite, " a kind of spoil of war, a down payment on a wondrous world promised". It served as a step in getting back to normal life. There is good examination of commercial power and many amusing instances of how advertisers changed dialogue or situations in their sponsored programs. You couldn't say 'ford a river' in a western if it was sponsored by Chevy. It does become puzzling when it is claimed that Judgment at Nuremberg looked into the minds of Nazi judges, when it was the Americans who were judging, but the details of the program being sponsored by the American Gas Association are strange to behold. This is an engrossing book that also includes much information on the different types of programs and people in them and then in a second section deals with 3 senators, Estes Kefauver, Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy and how television changed the style of politics - you could present your 'case' to the people themselves. The growth of presidential advertising and being able to reach out to the American citizens as well as the cynicism of the quiz show scandals is well covered. In all it's an appealing book to read, as well as one that will give a good history of the 50's and America itself.

When the first television was demonstrated in 1927, a headline in The New York Times read, "Like a Photo Come to Life." It was a momentous occasion. But the power of television wasn't fully harnessed until the 1950s, when the medium was, as Eric Burns says, "At its most preoccupying, its most life-altering." And Burns, a former NBC News correspondent who is an Emmy-winner for his broadcast writing, knows about the impact of television. *Invasion of the Mind Snatchers* chronicles the influence of television that was watched daily by the baby boomer generation. As kids became spellbound by Howdy Doody and The Ed Sullivan Show, Burns reveals, they often acted out their favorite programs. Likewise, they purchased the merchandise being promoted by performers, and became fascinated by the personalities they saw on screen, often emulating their behavior. It was the first generation raised by TV and Burns looks at both the promise of broadcasting as espoused by the inventors, and how that promise was both redefined and lost by the corporations who helped to spread the technology. Yet Burns also contextualizes the social, cultural, and political events that helped shape the Fifties--from Sputnik and the Rosenberg trial to Senator Joseph McCarthy's Red Scare. In doing so, he charts the effect of television on politics, religion, race, and sex, and how the medium provided a persuasive message to the young, impressionable viewers.

"[A]n entertaining as well as informative book.... Burns provides sharp analysis, explaining just how the industry exercised unprecedented power over the average American's thoughts about news events such as the McCarthy hearings, social changes such as civil rights protests, and the roles of women and African Americans. This well-researched book contains a nice combination of serious topics and humorous anecdotes, plus an insightful bibliography. VERDICT: Reading a work by Burns is like having a delightful, intelligent conversation with a cultural expert. Highly recommended for TV history enthusiasts as well as general readers." --Library Journal