



Manufacturing Desire: Media, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life

Arthur Asa Berger

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The average person in America watches four hours of television per day and spends the equivalent of nine years of his or her life in front of the television set. If the attention most people devote to popular culture—listening to the news, watching soap operas, reading the comics—were added up, it would reveal that most people spend an enormous amount of time with popular culture, which becomes, in large measure, their culture. *Manufacturing Desire* is a study of how the mass media broadcast or spread various popular arts; further, how the media and popular arts play a major role in shaping our everyday lives.

The television shows we watch, the movies we see, the radio programs we listen to, and all the comics strips we read influence social behavior. They give us ideas about what is good and evil, about how to solve problems, and about how we should relate to others. If we understand this, says Berger, then the way we think about our media-influenced culture will be far different than if we see popular culture as mindless entertainment. Berger provides an analysis of the way popular culture and the mass media simultaneously reflect and affect various aspects of American culture and society. He examines commercials, television shows, comics, film, humor, and everyday life in terms of what beliefs and values are found in them, what attitudes toward ourselves and our societies are contained in them, how they achieve their effects, and what they reflect about present-day American culture and society.

The book begins with a consideration of theoretical matters related to the study of popular culture and the mass media, and focuses on the important contributions of Gilbert Seldes on the subject. Throughout Berger makes use of a number of different perspectives to show how various disciplines, modes of analysis, philosophical positions, and belief systems help people interpret a given text. He concludes with an analysis of the impact mass media have across America, cross-culturally, and internationally. *Manufacturing Desire* will provide the general reader as well as specialists in communication and information, sociology, and psychology with a better understanding of the effects of mass media and popular culture on contemporary society.

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