

Get Reel: Produce Your Own Life

Nancy Mramor Kajuth

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This intriguing book suggests ways to cope with media overload and addiction.

Media expert Nancy Mramor Kajuth writes in *Get Reel* that “who you are is partially the product of television and other media.” Mramor Kajuth suggests that watching television not only influences how we think and act, it can also become addictive. Some viewers, in fact, may escalate from “loyalty” to certain television shows, to “attachment” (“when you need your fix of a show,” writes the author), to “addiction,” which could involve such conditions as “using TV as a sedative,” “indiscriminate viewing,” and “feeling loss of control while viewing.” Her antidote is something she calls “conscious viewing,” the strategies and tactics for which make up the bulk of the book.

In each chapter, Mramor Kajuth explores a different aspect of today’s media, providing an overview, examples, and discussion of the impact it has on the typical consumer. Her chapter on reality TV, for example, offers a solid assessment of one of the more prominent (and some would say notorious) television formats. Surprisingly, reports the author, reality TV is not the most popular television genre, but there are so many reality TV shows because, she writes, “they satisfy a need to believe that it’s real.” To some extent, the author questions the veracity of several of these shows, referring as well to the blurring of fact and fiction in documentary-style movies. The section, “RxTV for Finding the Reality in the Reality Shows,” details several specific strategies to help the viewer critically evaluate content in reality shows.

Get Reel is chock full of sidebars filled with media facts, quotes, and observations, as well as questionnaires and quizzes that offer self-evaluation. These elements nicely break up the text and add an interactive quality to the book. Mramor Kajuth also includes a segment called “SpyTV” in each chapter designed to help make the connection between what is viewed in the media and the reality of one’s own life.

Mramor Kajuth is a knowledgeable media guide whose writing style is entertaining. The book is visually interesting and easy to read. The cover photograph, a woman holding a movie-style clapboard with benefits of the book chalked on it, is cleverly appropriate. An extensive reference section is included.

If there is a downside to the book, *Get Reel* does seem to skew toward the broad assumption that most media is addictive, and that for the majority of consumers, there is a need to put the remote aside and connect with one’s “Real Conscious Life.” Not every one may agree. Still, given today’s reality that we consume media in ever-increasing quantities across multiple screens, it is clear that television, movies, and other forms of media entertainment are influential if not controlling. *Get Reel* is a very real attempt to return that control to the consumer.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September 30, 2015)

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