



Stephen J. Cannell Television Productions: A History of All Series and Pilots

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For twenty years, Stephen J. Cannell was in the hero business. Or perhaps, the anti-hero business. Whatever the case, his heroes were on the side of the slightly tarnished angels. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Cannell was the single most influential figure in populist action/adventure television. His series range from the smart, wry humor of *The Rockford Files* to the comic-book exploits of *The A-Team*. Inbetween, he has created, co-created, and overseen such productions as the pacifist but macho war series *Black Sheep Squadron*, super-hero spoof *The Greatest American Hero*, the beach boy bromance *Riptide*, the outrageous vigilante show *Hardcastle and McCormick*, and the Eastwood-inspired anti-cop show *Hunter*. In the late '80s, he produced the critically acclaimed *21*, *Jump Street*, and the quietly horrific, grim, dark mob show *Wiseguy*.

In the 1970s, his marriage of B-western plots and values to the post-Watergate cynicism of 1970s cinema refreshed popular culture, drawing from themes explored and avenues opened by Robert Altman and Clint Eastwood, perhaps the two most influential film-makers of the period. His knowing, self-parodic approach to a tired and weary action/adventure genre permeated all of American television throughout the 1980s, and much cinema thereafter.

On the surface, Cannell's heroes are traditional conservative icons of Hollywood myth, cops, judges, vigilantes, military men, tough guys--but they are also renegades and rebels, individual malcontents at odds with the injustices of the world. And despite producing shows featuring handsome but flawed male heroes (or perhaps because of it), his shows were phenomenally popular with the female audience as well as the intended men, displaying a satisfying progressive attitude towards women both in front of, and behind the camera.

This book discusses in detail the programs of this writer-producer (and sometimes director and actor), and lists every episode of his 1970s and 1980s series, with storylines and writer, director, and cast credits for 22 shows. With extensive quotes and research, it discusses Cannell's methods of working, his critics, his recurring themes and obsessions, and his successes and failures, and includes publicity materials, information on unsold pilots, and a four-page bibliography and ten pages of sources and quotations to support the author's observations and opinions. Every statement is backed up by cross-referencing numerous examples not only of specific episodes of Cannell shows, but other producers' series as well. There is a 38 page index.

Shows covered: *The Rockford Files*; *Baretta*; *City of Angels*; *Black Sheep Squadron*; *Richie Brockelman*; *The Duke*; *Stone*; *Tenspeed and Brownshoe*; *The Greatest American Hero*; *The Quest*; *The A-Team*; *Hardcastle and McCormick*; *Rousters*; *Riptide*; *Hunter*; *Stingray*; *The Last Precinct*; *21*, *Jump Street*; *Wiseguy*; *J.J. Starbuck*; *Sonny Spoon*; *Unsub*; plus: unsold pilots; *The Wrap-Up*; sources of quotations; bibliography; index (all featured series include episode listings).

"Outstanding" (e-mail to publishers, Cannell Entertainment)

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