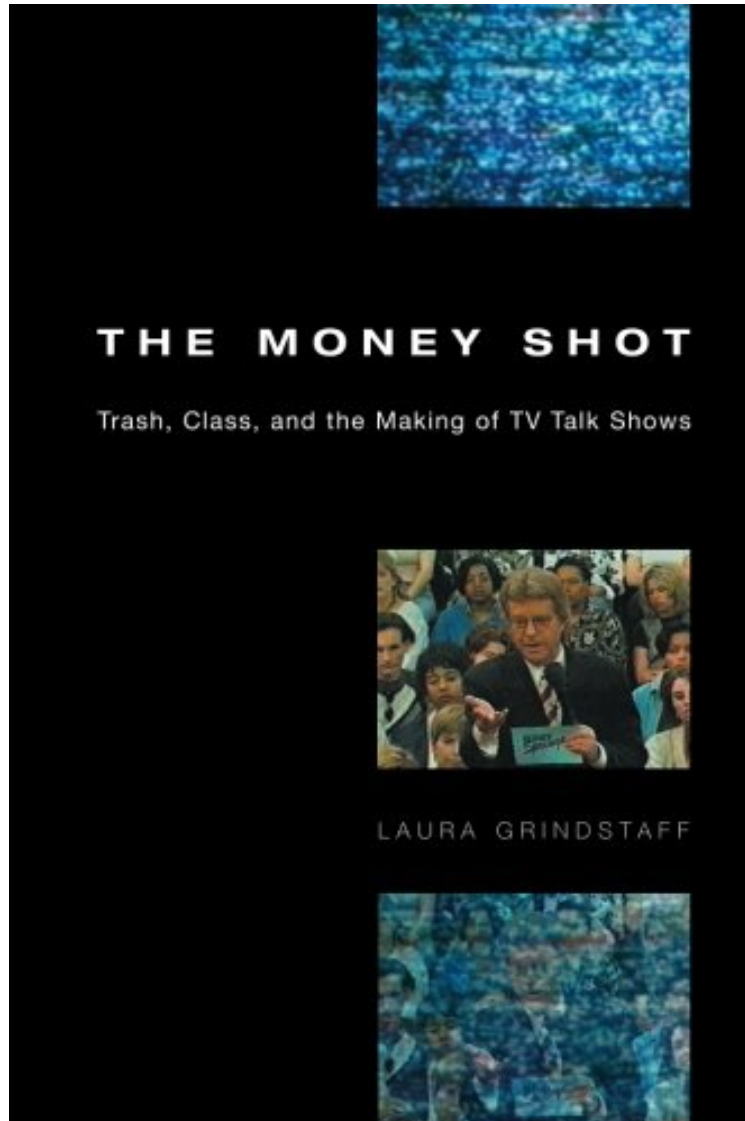


[DOWNLOAD] The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows

# The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows

*Laura Grindstaff*

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**Laura Grindstaff : The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows:

4 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Read if you're curious what's real what's fake By JustMeI found this book very informative, and it answered my many questions about the truth behind talk shows. The author presents the industry from all angles, from studio audience to home audience to guests to producers. The only drawback is that I

found some parts of the book overloaded with "big words" that are not necessary, and are distracting from the substance of the book. For example: "Such practices do not guarantee fireworks and drama, but they help because they locate the potential for dramatic interaction in the strategic juxtaposition of participants rather than (or in addition to) individual performative competence." I consider myself to be fairly skilled when it comes to vocabulary, but I found myself having to reread paragraphs on many occasions. If you're genuinely interested in the topic of talk shows, as I was, it will probably be worth your while to read. It will probably answer all of your questions, if you're willing to pluck the answers out from behind the excess wording.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An exemplary work of media ethnography that explores daytime talk shows

By Corrina Laughlin

The prologue for *The Money Shot* by Laura Grindstaff is aptly titled "Setting the Stage." Fast-paced and written in the first person, this short introduction describes what it looks like to produce a talk show. The ethnographer is present in the frenetic scenes that illustrate how the two talk shows she worked on, the pseudonymous Randy and Diana, functioned. The prologue thus describes setting the scene of a talk show while at the same time serving to set the scene for this monograph. *The Money Shot* is a work of media ethnography that explores how daytime talk shows work, what they reveal about our understandings of culture, class, and mediated discourse. Grindstaff justifies her ethnographic approach by noting that ethnography shares many characteristics with daytime talk shows: "just as daytime talk shows differ from many other forms of television in that they give ordinary people the opportunity to contribute to their own narrativization (albeit in a highly circumscribed and limited manner), ethnography affords ordinary people a similar opportunity in an academic context with different limitations and constraints" (Grindstaff, 2002: 35). Ethnography seeks to represent the every-day realities of real people, talk shows purport to do the same thing. Ethnography also makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange. In a similar way, daytime talk shows warp the "ordinary" into the "extraordinary." Grindstaff expressly explains that "in many ways, fieldwork mirrors the methods of talk-show production: while producers transform real-life experiences into entertainment, ethnographers transform them into research" (Grindstaff, 2002: 41). It is a bold move to compare the work of knowledge production to the work of entertainment, but it is also an important one given Grindstaff's aims. Grindstaff's book hopes to excavate how our notions of talk shows are classed in a particular manner and how that class consciousness is reinscribed by the talk-show format. Thus, putting an ethnographic monograph on the same plane as a talk show is a political move that seeks to destabilize received understandings of "high" and "low" culture. Because the world of talk-show producing is so far removed from most cultural contexts, much of *The Money Shot* is preoccupied with describing how the production process works. Grindstaff uses interviews and field notes to explain jargon common to talk show producers like "Going hunting," "The blind date," and "Dropouts." With these descriptions Grindstaff demonstrates an affordance of media ethnography. The participant observation process allows her access into a world that otherwise would have remained opaque to an academic audience, but it is a world that is nonetheless crucial for those who study media to understand. The legerdemain of producers is herein explained and the description that makes up these sections of *The Money Shot* serves to produce an important kind of knowledge, though one that is often less valued by the academy--the knowledge of how things work on a logistical, practical level.

Grindstaff's later chapters, especially chapter eight, take a longer view, connecting the work that talk shows do to larger theoretical constructs. The author self-consciously indicates this shift by noting that "since this chapter is the final segment of this particular 'show' and it's time for the 'host' to wrap things up, it is to the matter of exploitation that I now turn" (Grindstaff, 2002: 247). In this chapter Grindstaff extrapolates from the particular case of talk shows to generate insights about the role of class difference in mass media more broadly. To wit: "The media do not simply reflect reality 'out there.' By definition, they mediate, even when, or perhaps especially when, it is real life that is purportedly being revealed. The ways in which talk shows mediate the experiences of ordinary people are not random or haphazard but systematic and patterned" (Grindstaff, 2002: 249). Grindstaff's main insights concern how class is deployed by media professionals and how it is understood by the "ordinary" people who seek to make their mark on the world by participating in talk shows. While talk shows are commonly dismissed as "trash TV," Grindstaff urges her audience to look closer at the discourses represented within them for what they reveal about how class functions in popular culture. For Grindstaff, "Popular culture is not simply a space outside elite discourse for celebrating the culture of the masses or paying homage to a romanticized notion of class resistance. Rather, to paraphrase Bird (1992), popular culture is the symbolic order within which subordinate classes live their subordination" (Grindstaff, 2002: 272). In this last chapter the thick description performed by the other chapters in the book has its payoff in theoretical insights.

Grindstaff again revisits the analogue between her monograph and the talk-show genre when she titles the last section in her book: "Laura's final thought," which recalls the ending of every Jerry Springer Show. Again, she draws our attention to common understandings of high and low culture and asks what kind of knowledge is produced by texts such as *The Money Shot*? And, how does understanding it in relation to what is considered a product of "low culture," namely the talk show, reveal our class-based prejudices of mass media and working class forms of popular and political engagement?

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Television Talk and Blow-by-Blow Commentary

By A Customer

Grindstaff has produced an excellent book exposing the underbelly of daytime talk show production. Her profuse detail gathered through extensive ethnographic fieldwork pays off in an effective account explaining the production process associated with

the talk show. We see how the offbeat topics are formulated, guests recruited, and production secured on numerous talk show episodes. We are taken behind the scenes and understand that it is a small miracle that the television format manages to survive on a daily basis. The writing is precise and the volume is well annotated. A fan of these talk shows will gain greater appreciation of how the process is structured and the impact upon producers, talk show guests, and studio audience members. This is a magnificent analysis that should be read by everyone curious about the talk show phenomenon.

He leaped from his chair, ripped off his microphone, and lunged at his ex-wife. Security guards rushed to intercept him. The audience screamed, then cheered. Were producers concerned? Not at all. They were getting what they wanted: the money shot. From "classy" shows like Oprah to "trashy" shows like Jerry Springer, the key to a talk show's success is what Laura Grindstaff calls the money shot moments when guests lose control and express joy, sorrow, rage, or remorse on camera. In this new work, Grindstaff takes us behind the scenes of daytime television talk shows, a genre focused on "real" stories told by "ordinary" people. Drawing on extensive interviews with producers and guests, her own attendance of dozens of live tapings around the country, and more than a year's experience working on two nationally televised shows, Grindstaff shows us how producers elicit dramatic performances from guests, why guests agree to participate, and the supporting roles played by studio audiences and experts. Grindstaff traces the career of the money shot, examining how producers make stars and experts out of ordinary people, in the process reproducing old forms of cultural hierarchy and class inequality even while seeming to challenge them. She argues that the daytime talk show does give voice to people normally excluded from the media spotlight, but it lets them speak only in certain ways and under certain rules and conditions. Working to understand the genre from the inside rather than pass judgment on it from the outside, Grindstaff asks not just what talk shows can tell us about mass media, but also what they reveal about American culture more generally.

From Publishers Weekly An assistant sociology professor at the University of California at Davis, Grindstaff draws on the language of pornography in analyzing the sometimes steamy and mostly conflict-driven realm of TV talk shows. In porn films, "the money shot" is the moment of male orgasm, and Grindstaff successfully argues that shows like Jerry Springer and Ricki Lake can only be pulled off if they have an emotionally raw "money shot" moment in which guests weep, throw chairs or fling themselves at another guest. "Like pornography," she writes, "daytime talk is a narrative of explicit revelation in which people 'get down and dirty' and 'bare it all' for the pleasure, fascination, or repulsion of viewers." Although similar insights have been expressed by other cultural critics, who've gone into some detail about the effects of these programs on media and society, Grindstaff veers in a refreshingly different academic direction. Approaching the subject from the inside, by interviewing producers, assistants and guests, as well as describing her own yearlong internship at two unnamed talk shows, the author provides a behind-the-camera perspective that differentiates her material from other sociology books on the topic. Her preference for academic language occasionally makes for dry reading, but it also keeps the book from being a titillating exposé akin to the very shows she's describing. On the whole, she lets her natural curiosity come through as she delves into the motivation of the guests, the frustration of the producers and the sheer inanity of cobbling together a show in which bouncers are forced to separate a wife from her husband's mistress. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal From the front lines of daytime TV talk shows, Grindstaff (sociology, Univ. of California, Davis) shares a captivating field study that reveals the history, motives, and methods of producing the daytime talk show. The "money shot," a phrase borrowed from film pornography, is the moment when a talk-show guest displays raw human emotion joy, rage, sorrow, or remorse. Said to be the source of soaring TV talk-show ratings and regularly criticized for downgrading the quality of daytime TV the "money shot" also demonstrates a current focus of American culture. Grindstaff argues that although talk shows may give a voice to ordinary people who would otherwise be denied access to the media, that voice is heavily restricted by numerous conditions and rules of participation. While detailing how class inequality has become the fuel for the ongoing production of daytime talk shows, Grindstaff also gives an intriguing report about a topic in which most of us have at least some interest. This well-thought-out and expertly researched study is suitable for all public and academic libraries. Molly Missetich, Coeur d'Alene, ID Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "Laura Grindstaff went to the front lines of talk show production and lived to tell the tale. She comes back with the goods. The Money Shot is a rare tour through one of the stranger spots on American television, combining funny/disturbing stories and inside scoops with sharp, learned insights into the management - by producers, guests, audiences, and American culture as a whole - of emotion, expertise, fame, and, most important, of class." - Joshua Gamson, author of Freaks Talk Back