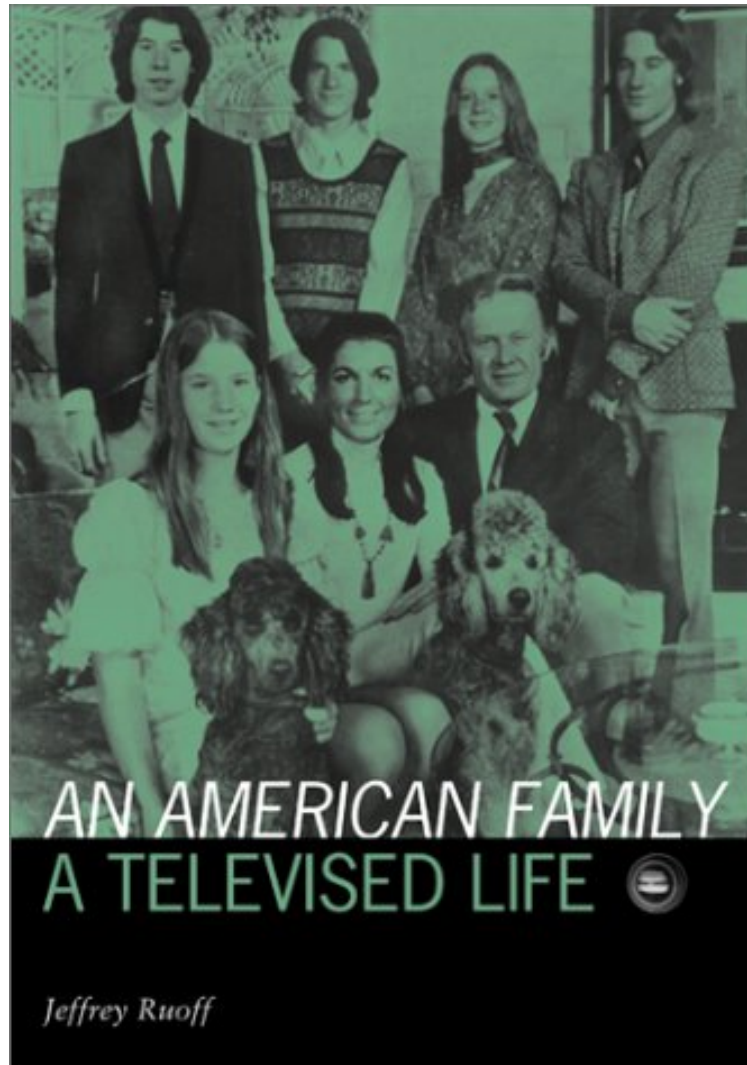


[Free] American Family: A Televised Life (Visible Evidence)

American Family: A Televised Life (Visible Evidence)

Jeffrey Ruoff

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Jeffrey Ruoff : American Family: A Televised Life (Visible Evidence) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Family: A Televised Life (Visible Evidence):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A worthwhile book...By Mark DillonAn excellent (though brief) tome (I could have read another 100 pages!) that covers all aspects of the (in)famous prelude to today's "reality" TV--- though today's "reality" TV can hardly top the original series!42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. The comprehensive guide to this groundbreaking seriesBy A CustomerNow that "reality" television is a dominant format for mainstream television (from the fourth--and counting-- installment of "Survivor" to "The Bachelor" and on and on), it makes sense to go back to the original."An American Family" was a surprise success when it was first broadcast

in 1973: a 12-part series on PBS with very few voice-overs and what now seem like long shots of an affluent California family (two divorcing parents and five kids) doing things like playing guitar and discussing mundane topics and cleaning out their backyard pool (there were more engaging moments than that, but they were not the majority of shots). What accounted for this series' success? How did it get made? How was it edited, and what was kept in and left out? Why is it still so compelling despite the passage of time and the declining attention spans of Americans in the past 30 years? Could it get made today? This ultimate book about "An American Family" answers many of these questions and more: probing the origins of the series, and analyzing the final product and the widespread reaction to it in well-researched and precise detail. The filmmakers were very lucky (in the sense of being able to create compelling TV) to have chanced upon the Loud family, in which the parents were about to get divorced and in which the eldest son Lance (who died in 2002, sadly) provided such a usable storyline (hanging out with Warhol's crowd in New York, etc). The book debunks the widely-held belief that Lance "came out" during the series. He never explicitly says he's gay on the show. However, of course he was, and it was much of America's first exposure to an openly gay man on TV, week after week. If you've never seen this series but are still intrigued by it, also buy the book! Reading it will give you a great sense of the program, and will allow you to visualize it. (The still illustrations also help, as do accompanying material like press-release photos and ads from the time). I only wish the series itself was for sale somewhere! Unfortunately, WNET in New York no longer seems to own the rights. 5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Too Technical

By D. Warfield

Unfortunately, I did not see the original series; caught clips on PBS and was hooked. I thought this book was going to give me more of an insight into the family personally and in the aspect of social sciences - but it was more of a film history tome. Yes, there were candid photos of the family but ones related to other "cinema verite" series outnumbered them. I can't say it was a "good or bad" book, just didn't interest me personally.

Before 1973, the Loud family of Santa Barbara, California, lived in the privacy of their own home. With the airing of the documentary *An American Family*, that "privacy" extended to every American home that had a television in it-and there was no going back to the happy land of *Beaver*, *Donna Reed*, and *Father Knows Best*. This book is the first to offer a close, sustained look at *An American Family*-the documentary that blurred conventions, stirred passions among viewers and reviewers, revised impressions of family life and definitions of private and public, and began the breakdown of distinctions between reality and spectacle that culminated in cultural phenomena from *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to *Survivor*. While placing Craig Gilbert's innovative series in the context of 1970s nonfiction film and television, Jeffrey Ruoff tells the story behind *An American Family* from conception to broadcast, from reception to long-term impact. He reintroduces us to the Louds as intimate details of their daily lives, from one child's dance recital to another's gay lifestyle to the parents' divorce proceedings, unfold first before the camera and then before American viewers, challenging audiences to think seriously about family, marital relations, sexuality, affluence, and the American dream. In the documentary's immediate impact-on both producers and viewers of media-Ruoff uncovers the roots of new nonfiction forms including confessional talk shows like *Oprah*, first-person documentary films like Ross McElwee's acclaimed *Sherman's March*, and reality TV programs such as *The Real World*, *Survivor*, and *Big Brother*. A comprehensive production and reception study, Ruoff's work restores *An American Family* to its rightful, pioneering place in the history of American television. Jeffrey Ruoff is a film historian, documentary filmmaker, and assistant professor of film and television studies at Dartmouth College. He is co-author (with Kenneth Ruoff) of *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (1998). Visible Evidence Series, volume 11