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The Entertainment Machine: American Show Business in the Twentieth Century. By Robert C. Toll. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Pp. xiii + 284. Illustrations, notes, bibliographic essay. \$12.95 (paper) \$29.95 (cloth).

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Author

Kramer, Larry J.

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instructed George Gershwin when he was working on his masterpiece, "Porgy and Bess."

Red and Hot is a fine study which should be of extreme interest not only to Russian scholars and musicologists, but to anyone in any way interested in cultural history.

Andrew Krastins
University of California
Los Angeles

The Entertainment Machine: American Show Business in the Twentieth Century. By ROBERT C. TOLL. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Pp. xiii + 284. Illustrations, notes, bibliographic essay. \$12.95 (paper) \$29.95 (cloth).

Poet Robert Creeley, referring to the relationship between fictional style and narrative, once claimed that form was nothing more than the expression of content. Creeley's assertion could serve as the theme of Robert C. Toll's *The Entertainment Machine*, a comprehensive survey of American show business and entertainment media from 1880 to 1980. While Toll's earlier study, *On With the Show* (1976), focused solely on American live entertainment in the nineteenth century, the present volume delineates the symbiotic relationship between the development of electronic technology--film, radio, television, records, magnetic tape, and video--and such popular genres as musicals, Westerns, crime shows, and comedy. Toll stresses that the explosion of entertainment machines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the result of an electronic revolution which shaped the contributions of such innovative figures as D. W. Griffith in film, Frank Sinatra in music, and Lucille Ball in comedy. *The Entertainment Machine* emphasizes that it is impossible to separate the form of a particular electronic medium from its content, a point which accentuates Toll's debt to the work of Marshall McLuhan.

By the 1930s, American audiences had at their disposal a wide choice of entertainment machines for use in the home. Toll provides a useful overview of the development and impact of these machines, beginning with Thomas Edison's invention of the kinescope in the 1890s. There is a discussion of D. W. Griffith's landmark films, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), both of which prompted President Woodrow Wilson to exclaim that Griffith's art was like "writing history with lightning." Toll also examines the connection between live stage (the most popular American entertainment form in the nineteenth century)

and the evolution of film. Topics such as the economic consolidation of the American film industry in the 1920s and the adverse effects that motion picture sound recording had on live stage and theatre are well introduced. He clarifies how pacesetters in each branch of electronic media possessed the special ability to exploit the particular technologies inherent in each form. Thus *Amos 'n Andy* drew millions of listeners in the 1930s because it capitalized so well on radio's ability to fuel the audience's imagination. Early television--with its tiny screen--suited the larger-than-life comic antics of Milton Berle and Lucille Ball.

A major drawback of *The Entertainment Machine* is that it attempts an all-inclusive view of film, television, popular music, and radio. The result is a sketchy overview of the media rather than an in-depth analysis. Although Toll links the growth of entertainment machines to historical forces, he does not develop these themes into extended arguments. He touches on such issues as the effects of the economic consolidation of the Hollywood film industry on cinematic content, the cultural dislocation brought about by the Great Depression and the public's demand for escapist entertainment, and the effects of home media on the family.

The second part of the book deals with the ways in which radio, television, music and film media have treated Western, musicals, crime, sex and comedy genres over a century. Students interested in an introduction to these topics will find Toll's brief survey excellent, although he does not provide any new historical insights. While Toll claims that the content of the media has always reflected changing public tastes and that its form has been shaped by the development of entertainment machines, he treats both form and content as an integrated whole. He could have expanded his discussion to include the role of ideology in the creation and consumption of electronic media or devoted more attention to the ways in which electronic machines impinged upon the consciousness of Americans. His survey of the development of American entertainment machines is a valuable--if somewhat broad and sketchy--introduction to a complex field. Much of what Toll has to say has been said before, but historians working in the area of popular culture can use this book as both a valuable reference work and as an introductory text for undergraduates. There is also a good, bibliographic essay directing interested readers to more intensive studies on the issues which Toll has surveyed.

Larry Kramer
University of California,
Los Angeles