

What Are Your Children Watching?



Rating the Top 20 Most Popular Prime-Time Broadcast TV Shows Watched by Children Ages 2-17

NOVEMBER 2008

PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL™ ADVISORY BOARD

Steve Allen

Honorary Chairman Emeritus

L. Brent Bozell III

Founder of the Parents Television Council

Phil Barron

Michelle Barron

Dr. William Bennett

William Blinn

Pat Boone

Wendy Borcherdt

Sen. Sam Brownback

John Carvelli

Dr. Delman Coates

Tim Conway

Billy Ray Cyrus

Susan Howard

Dave Johnson

Gary Johnson

Dean Jones

Naomi Judd

Sen. Blanche Lambert Lincoln

Coleman Luck

Holly McClure

Michael Medved

Jim Otto

Father Val J. Peter

Mel Renfro

Cheryl Rhoads

Connie Sellecca

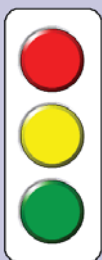
Dr. Robert Shaw

Mary Streep

Patrick Trueman

Ken Wales

Susan Wales



RED: Show may include gratuitous sex, explicit dialogue, violent content, or obscene language, and is unsuitable for children.

YELLOW: The show contains adult-oriented themes and dialogue that may be inappropriate for youngsters.

GREEN: Family-friendly show promoting responsible themes and traditional values.

**For a more detailed ratings description visit:
www.parentstv.org/PTC/familyguide/Ratings.asp
(WARNING! Graphic descriptions are used.)**

What Are Your Children Watching?

Rating the Top 20 Most Popular Prime-Time Broadcast TV Shows Watched by Children Ages 2-17

2007-2008

PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL

Not all children ages 2-17 watch age-appropriate programs, according to Nielsen Media Research. Television shows that might sound innocent enough, such as *Family Guy* or *American Dad*, push the limits of decency with sexual innuendo and adult themes. On the other hand, children also flock to TV shows with positive values, like *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *American Idol*. Using its trademarked traffic-light ratings system, the Parents Television Council analyzed the twenty most popular prime time broadcast shows among children ages 2-17, ranking the programs according to their suitability for young viewers.

Each series was rated as suitable, questionably suitable, or unsuitable for young audiences, and then ranked from best to worst.

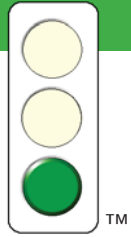
PTC ratings are based on an objective quantitative and qualitative analysis of the frequency and explicitness of foul language, sexual content, and violence present in each series. The PTC also takes into consideration time slot, target audience, themes and plotlines of each program it rates.

PTC Ranking of the Best and Worst Pr

Most Suitable

(BEST TO WORST)

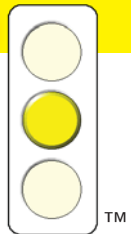
- 1) *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*
ABC/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays
- 2) *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?*
Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Fridays
- 3) *Don't Forget the Lyrics*
Fox/9:00 p.m. ET Fridays
- 4) *Deal or No Deal*
NBC/9:00 p.m. ET Wednesdays
and 8:00 p.m. ET Fridays
- 5) *NBC Sunday Night Football*
NBC/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays
- 6) *American Idol*
Fox/Returning Spring '09



Questionably Suitable

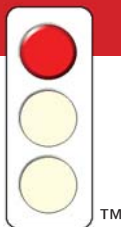
(BEST TO WORST)

- 7) *Dancing with the Stars*
ABC/8:00 p.m. ET Mondays,
9:00 p.m. ET Tuesdays
- 8) *So You Think You Can Dance*
Fox/Returning Spring '09
- 9) *America's Got Talent*
NBC/Returning Summer '09
- 10) *Amazing Race*
CBS/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays
- 11) *Survivor*
CBS/8:00 p.m. ET Thursdays
- 12) *King of the Hill*
CBS/8:30 p.m. ET Sundays
- 13) *The Simpsons*
Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays
- 14) *American Gladiator*
NBC/Returning Summer '09



Prime-Time Shows Watched by Children

Not Suitable



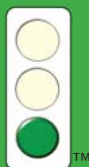
(BEST TO WORST)

- 15) *Hell's Kitchen*
Fox/Returning Spring '09
- 16) *House*
Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Tuesdays
- 17) *Heroes*
NBC/9:00 p.m. ET Mondays
- 18) *Moment of Truth*
Fox/Returning Spring '09
- 19) *American Dad*
Fox/9:30 p.m. ET Sundays
- 20) *Family Guy*
Fox/9:00 p.m. ET Sundays



The following listing is based on a Nielsen ranking of prime time broadcast programs most watched by children between the ages of 2-17 for the 2007-2008 television season. Only recurring or series programs returning in the 2008-2009 season were included. Each series has been evaluated for its appropriateness for children under the age of 18 based on a comprehensive review of the content on each of these programs.

#1

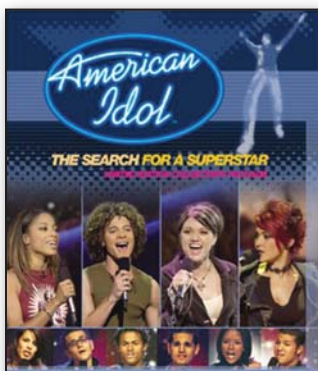


AMERICAN IDOL: THE SEARCH FOR A SUPERSTAR

Fox/Returning Spring '09

With television audiences becoming increasingly fragmented, *American Idol: The Search for a Superstar* has done what conventional Hollywood wisdom has declared to be impossible: it has united families in front of the television set and proven that wholesome, family-friendly entertainment can be wildly successful. Consistently the highest-rated show on television, this talent competition has given hundreds of young men and women a shot at becoming America's next singing sensation.

While some viewers may find producer Simon Cowell's harsh and often blunt commentary unappealing, *American Idol* is an entertaining show that the entire family can enjoy. *Idol* doesn't have a moral or a message, but it can



be appreciated for what it is: a talent competition, pure and simple. This reality series doesn't focus on backstabbing or betrayal, and it doesn't follow the contestants' bedroom shenanigans.

What it does focus on is the surprisingly good performances turned in by the talented young singers.



#2

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Fox/Returning Spring '09

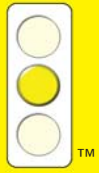
In what must surely mark a new low for broadcast television, contestants make gut-wrenching admissions and reveal their deepest, darkest secrets – secrets that may tear their lives and families apart – for a shot at winning the half-million dollar jackpot on Fox's *The Moment of Truth*. Contestants are strapped to a lie detector to ensure their complete candor, and their families and loved ones are seated in the audience where their complete devastation or utter humiliation is on full display and can be witnessed by millions of television viewers.



Contestants are often asked to reveal secret crushes, hidden affairs, immoral behavior, or their true feelings about a spouse or loved one, such as: "Has a man ever offered you money so that you would sleep with him?", "While at your current job, have you ever touched a female co-worker inappropriately?", "Have you had sexual relations at a place where you worked?", and "Would you sleep with a former lover if you knew you would never get caught?"

That the networks could even conceive of such a program and put it on the air speaks volumes about the state of our culture. That people would actually watch says even more.

#3



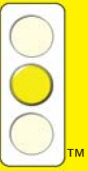
SURVIVOR

CBS/8:00 p.m. ET Thursdays

On *Survivor*, the show that helped usher in the era of reality TV, contestants are left to fend for themselves in a secluded and remote location. With only the clothes on their backs and one luxury item each, they must struggle not only to survive, but to stay in the competition. Each week one contestant is voted “off the island” by his fellow contestants. The last one standing wins the million dollar prize and the title of “Sole Survivor.”

Content on *Survivor* can be somewhat unpredictable. Some seasons are very clean, other seasons less so. Already this season, a contestant exposed his genitals while running during an immunity challenge, and the CBS network did not blur or pixilate the image. In past seasons a male contestant walked around in the nude and two female contestants stripped off their clothing during a challenge in exchange for chocolate cookies and peanut butter. In other seasons, contestants have been involved in sexual situations – inviting TV audiences to become voyeurs. In addition, some episodes have contained graphic scenes of violence or bodily harm, as when a contestant passed out and collapsed into a bonfire, badly burning both his hands.





#4

DANCING WITH THE STARS

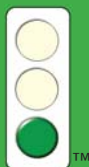
ABC/8:00 p.m. ET Mondays,
9:00 p.m. ET Tuesdays

Who would have thought a ballroom dancing competition would be a ratings success and one of the most popular programs with young audiences? This surprise hit which pairs celebrities with professional dancers has earned a permanent spot on ABC's prime-time schedule and has made America fall in love with ballroom dancing.

At the beginning of each episode the hosts explain the type of dances to be performed and the criteria the judges will use to determine the winner. As the stars perform, the viewer sees the featured dance steps in action and gains an understanding of an art and entertainment form largely overlooked by American popular culture in the 21st century. Unfortunately, the judges' comments are often quite suggestive, and guest artists have performed songs of questionable suitability for family audiences.



#5



EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION

ABC/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays

Extreme Makeover: Home Edition may be the most family-friendly series on television, and is an excellent example of a constructive and uplifting reality TV show. Unlike other reality series that emphasize and exploit contestants' worst qualities (greed, dishonesty, vanity, *et cetera*), this inspiring program showcases charity and selflessness.

This season, the show's theme is heroes. Each week, carpenter Ty Pennington and a crew of designers, contractors, and workmen completely renovate the home of a family that has sacrificed to serve others. Besides highlighting the good works for families in need, the program also features local companies that often donate funds to establish scholarships for the young children in these struggling families, ensuring they have a chance at a better future. This series is a breath of fresh air and a television rarity.





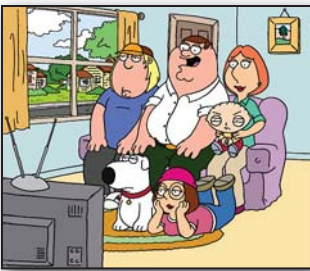
#6

FAMILY GUY

Fox/9:00 p.m. ET Sundays

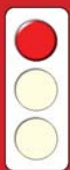
Family Guy is a raunchy animated series about a blue-collar New England family and is utterly lacking in any redeeming qualities.

Although the show is intended to be a satire of the American family, it spends most of its time pushing the limits of decency with heavy sexual innuendo and sexual themes. The writers



seem to be intent on offending everyone by using every conceivable perversion from bestiality to necrophilia to pedophilia to fuel stories. Cartoon

nudity is common and violence, though animated, is frequent and often brutal. Episodes also frequently employ foul language. Parents of young children are especially cautioned because *Family Guy's* animated format is sure to make it attractive to young viewers.



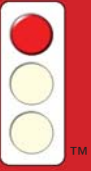
HOUSE

Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Tuesdays

Dr. Gregory House is an unconventional physician and an undisputed genius. He is an infectious disease specialist capable of solving the cases that no one else can. His amazing diagnostic skills are complemented by an astonishing perception of human nature. With just a quick glimpse at a patient, he knows whether he is hiding something, lying, or if the condition is merely psychosomatic. However, House is also a misanthropic eccentric inept at personal relationships. He's has been in severe pain for years because of a leg injury and has become addicted to pain-killers.

House is not particularly violent, although some scenes depicting surgical procedures might be too graphic for young viewers. Several episodes have contained sexual content. Language can also be raw – and while many adults may enjoy watching House solve medical mysteries the series is certainly not appropriate for young children.





#8

HELL'S KITCHEN

Fox/Returning Spring '09

This reality show features Michelin star Chef Gordon Ramsay challenging young aspiring chefs in weeks of grueling competition. Each week a contestant is eliminated until only one remains. In addition to bragging rights, the winner is awarded their own restaurant.

Hell's Kitchen is replete with foul language and abuse hurled at the contestants by Chef Ramsay and other competitors. Episodes feature a nearly non-stop barrage of bleeped f-words and insults.



#9



NBC SUNDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

NBC/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays

The lack of child-appropriate programming on television can be confounding for parents. Fortunately, sports are usually a safe alternative, and in the fall, that means football. As an added advantage, children – young boys in particular – love to watch sports and watching with your child can present opportunities to



talk about good sportsmanship, leadership, and teamwork. All in all, it's not a bad way to spend a Sunday evening.

Parents really don't have to worry about content during the games – but increasingly the ads during the games are a becoming a major concern, with commercials for male enhancement, beer and adult-oriented prime-time dramas occupying prime ad space.



#10

HEROES

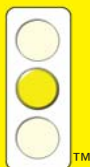
NBC/9:00 p.m. ET Mondays

Heroes is a sci-fi drama about several ordinary people who gradually discover that they have super-human abilities. Each episode reveals a piece of the puzzle that explains how they got their powers and how they will use them together to save the world.

Don't be fooled by the title of the show, however. These are not your archetypal comic book heroes who fight for truth, justice and the American way. Because of the comic-book aspect and unquestionable appeal of its young cast, this series will be especially attractive to adolescent and pre-adolescent viewers, which is especially troubling given the brutal, graphic and disturbing violence present in every episode, rather explicit sexual content, and harsh foul language.



#11



THE SIMPSONS

Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays

Now in its 20th season, *The Simpsons* is the longest running comedy series in U.S. TV history save for *Saturday Night Live*. It has beaten the previous record holder for the longest-running prime time animated series (*The Flintstones*) by more than ten years. *The Simp-*



sons hasn't changed much over the years. In the beginning critics complained about the irreverent humor, the bumbling father

figure and disrespectful attitudes displayed by the children – those elements are still present, and still problematic. On the plus side, the series depicts a loving if somewhat dysfunctional family, and episodes often contain a moral or a message.

The Simpsons frequently contains cartoon violence, and occasionally employs mild profanities and sexual innuendo. Such content isn't frequent, but is notable when it occurs.



#12

AMERICAN DAD

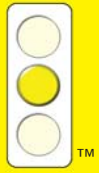
Fox/9:30 p.m. ET Sundays

American Dad is the brainchild of Seth MacFarlane, who also brought us the ultra-raunchy cartoon series *Family Guy*. *American Dad* follows Stan, a conservative CIA agent devoted to his country and his work above anything else, even his own family. Francine is his trophy housewife, and his children are Hailey, the rebellious daughter and Steve, the geeky son who has no scruples whatsoever. The family also includes Helmut, a lascivious German talking fish, and an androgynous alien from the outer space named Roger.

The show intends to be as irreverent as *Family Guy*, targeting American values and institutions. Stanley Smith's national sentiment is portrayed as mere jingoism, making him look like the ultimate ugly white male American. The humor consists of scatology and crude sexual innuendo. Violence is mostly comedic but can be quite graphic at times and often includes guns and fight sequences. Language is often coarse.



#13

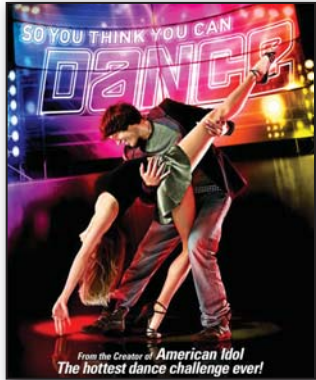


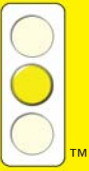
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE

Fox/Returning Spring '09

So You Think You Can Dance gives twenty dancers a shot at dancing in a Las Vegas show. Versatility is the key to success in this competition as dancers learn to perform a range of dance styles ranging from Hip Hop and Jazz to Modern and Ballroom. Each week one male and one female dancer are eliminated from the competition.

The choreographers explain techniques and influences to the contestants and the audience, helping to cultivate understanding and appreciation for the various dances. Some of the dances, particularly Hip Hop, can contain suggestive moves. After the mass auditions end, the amount of questionable language greatly diminishes as does any sexual innuendo. The judges offer support and constructive criticism to the contestants.





#14

AMERICA'S GOT TALENT

Fox/Returning Spring '09

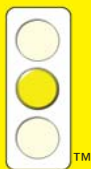
America's Got Talent showcases a vast array of talented performers competing for a million-dollar prize. Celebrities David Hasselhoff, Sharon Osbourne, and Piers Morgan judge the competitors, and the program is hosted by Jerry Springer.

While most of the acts are perfectly clean and wholesome – talented singers,



dancers, acrobats and musicians – this otherwise clean program is occasionally marred by the occasional strip-tease, burlesque act or similarly inappropriate performance.

#15



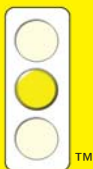
AMERICAN GLADIATORS

NBC/Returning Summer '09

American Gladiators was first introduced in the '80s. Athletically-inclined men and women take on superhuman gladiators in a series of physical challenges. Each contestant faces off with a different gladiator in various challenges leading up to the final round, where the two contestants go head to head in a grueling obstacle course to determine the ultimate winner. Wrestling star Hulk Hogan and female boxer Laila Ali host the program.



Though some of the behavior on display might be characterized as aggressive, the program is not violent, and nobody is seriously injured. Sex and foul language are not at issue with this program.



#16

KING OF THE HILL

Fox/8:30 p.m. ET Sundays

King of the Hill follows Hank Hill, a proud propane salesman from Texas, his wife Peggy, their adolescent and ambitionless son Bobby, and various beer-guzzling neighbors. Hank is a hard-working, admirable fellow with common sense and solid values who often finds himself having to put to right the mistakes made by his friends and family.

Episodes occasionally contain sexual content in the form of references to adultery or pornography and occasional scatological humor and foul language – though such content is typically not graphic. On the positive side, each episode typically includes a “moral” underscoring the importance of honesty, hard work, consideration for others, and so on.



#17



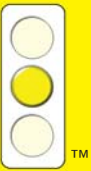
DON'T FORGET THE LYRICS

Fox/9:00 p.m. ET Thursdays

Don't Forget the Lyrics tests contestants' knowledge of popular song lyrics. Hosted by the affable and talented Wayne Brady, contestants choose a genre of pop music (disco, classic rock, pop, '80s...) and perform songs from that genre karaoke-style until the lyrics are cut out and the contestants are forced to finish the verse from memory to advance in the game.

The songs are all radio-friendly and tastefully chosen. Adults will enjoy listening to the songs they grew up with and seeing if they can recall the correct lyrics while children will enjoy hearing ordinary people attempting to perform songs the songs they think they know.





#18

THE AMAZING RACE

CBS/8:00 p.m. ET Sundays

Amazing Race features teams of two competing around the world. Each team works together to race through various tasks and each round ends in a pit stop, where the last team to arrive is either eliminated from the game or stripped of all their luggage and money for the next leg of the race. Teams participating include dating couples, married couples, pairs of friends, and siblings. The winning team earns a million dollar prize.

Episodes include ample foul language and questionable behavior, including back-stabbing, name-calling, and dirty tricks.



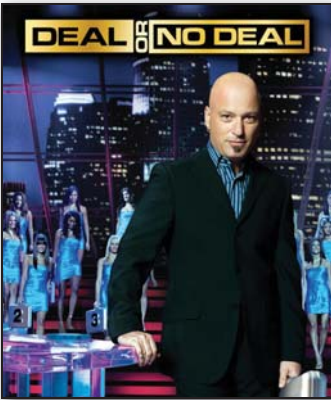
#19



DEAL OR NO DEAL

NBC/9:00 p.m. ET Wednesdays and
8:00 p.m. ET Fridays

ABC revived the prime-time game show in the late '90s with *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and reaped the rewards with blockbuster ratings. NBC has experienced similar ratings resurgence with this hit game show hosted by comedian Howie Mandel. *Deal or No Deal* is a game of odds in which contestants play for a top prize of \$1 million. The contestants are allowed to bring several people to aid



them in making decisions. Often they are spouses, friends or siblings and the significance of the person's relationship to the contestant is emphasized.

Though some parents have expressed concerns about the attention paid to the physical appearance of the models that hold the suitcases, *Deal or No Deal* is otherwise completely devoid of sex and violence and can safely be enjoyed by the whole family.



#20

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A 5th GRADER?

Fox/8:00 p.m. ET Thursdays

In the past two years, game shows have become a hot TV trend. The resurgence of the TV game show has had an added side benefit for families – they reliably provide inoffensive, family-friendly entertainment. A sterling example of this is Fox’s hit game show, *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* Hosted by Jeff Foxworthy, this program tests adults’ knowledge and memory of elementary text book trivia by having them compete against a panel of fifth graders for cash prizes that can add up to a million dollars.

Competitors who don’t know the answer to the question can “cheat” by “peeking,” “copying,” and finally, “dropping out.” While these are certainly not behaviors any parent would want their child to imitate, it is nothing more than school-themed lingo for commonly-used game show lifelines, not suggestions for how to get ahead in school.



PTC Entertainment Tracking System: State-of-the Art Television Monitoring System

The PTC's ability to scientifically track broadcast and selected cable network programs for sex, violence, and profanity is directly attributable to its state-of-the-art monitoring system, ETS. Conceived and designed by the PTC, ETS, or Entertainment Tracking System, allows the Parents Television Council to monitor every instance of sex, violence and profanity in network programs, and in many cable shows.

This research allows the organization to produce important studies such as *The Alarming Family Hour*, *No Place for Children: A Content Analysis of Sex, Foul Language and Violence During Network Television's Family Hour*; *Dying to Entertain: Violence on Prime-Time Broadcast Television*; and *The Ratings Sham: TV Executives Hiding Behind a System That Doesn't Work*.

Here's how it works: Every evening PTC VCRs record every prime-time series on ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, the CW, Ion, and MyNetworkTV, as well as original programming on basic cable, including MTV. The following day, the PTC's entertainment analysts don their headsets, turn on their computers, grab their remote controls and set about the arduous work of transcribing every offensive word, every instance of sexual innuendo and every act of violence in detail. These reports are fed into the PTC's custom-designed computer program.

The PTC is able to generate reports from the information collected by ETS. These reports form the basis of the organization's comprehensive studies, e-mail alerts, television recommendations and newsletters. ETS reports are provided to the Federal Communications Commission and other federal regulatory agencies, as they are the most reliable analysis of television programming available. Even the television networks do not have as comprehensive a resource as ETS.

Today the PTC programming archive consists of more than 110,000 hours of programming on nearly 17,000 video tapes. There is no other organization in the world that has this comprehensive library of television content analysis.

The organization will soon transfer all current videotaped programming to digital. This is a major undertaking requiring staff time and significant monetary resources. But as the repository of the most comprehensive archive of television programming, it's a responsibility the PTC sees as important. ETS is just one of the powerful tools that the PTC uses to affect positive change in the quality of television broadcasting.

PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL™

L. Brent Bozell III • Founder

Tim Winter • President

Mark Barnes • Senior Consultant

**Melissa Henson • Director of Communications
and Public Education**

Casey Bohannon • Internet Communications Manager

Christopher Gildemeister • Senior Editor/Writer

**Michelle Jackson-McCoy, Ph.D. •
Director of Research**

Aubree Bowling • Senior Entertainment Analyst

**Greg Rock, Ally Matteodo, Amanda Pownall,
Justin Capers, Oliver Saria**

Entertainment Analysts

Dan Isett • Director of Public Policy

Gavin Mc Kiernan • National Grassroots Director

Kevin Granich • Assistant to the Grassroots Director

Glen Erickson • Director of Corporate Relations

**LaQuita Marshall • Assistant to the Director of
Corporate Relations**

Patrick Salazar • Vice President of Development

Marty Waddell • Senior Development Officer

Larry Irvin, Nancy Meyer • Development Officers

Tracy Ferrell • Development Coordinator

Brad Tweten • Chief Financial Officer

Jane Dean • Office & Graphics Administrator

**Ronak Bhakta, Stephanie Buencilla,
Keith Winn • Interns**

**The PTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research
and education foundation.**

© Copyright 2008

Parents Television Council

**FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES
PLEASE CONTACT**

**Kelly Oliver or Megan Franko
CRC Public Relations
(703) 683-5004**

**The Parents Television Council (PTC)
is the nation's most influential
advocacy organization protecting
children against sex, violence,
and profanity on television and
in other media because of their
documented and long-term harmful
effects. Founded in 1995 to stem
the dramatic rise in indecent
programming, the PTC today
has become one of the strongest
watchdog organizations of the
entertainment industry.**

**PARENTS TELEVISION COUNCIL™
707 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2075
Los Angeles, California 90017
(213) 629-9255**

**Visit online the PTC's
Family Guide to Prime Time Television™**

www.ParentsTV.org®

