

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Pinoy Television, edited by San Juan

Review Author: Ruel S. De Vera

Philippine Studies vol. 48, no. 2 (2000): 281–283

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

in international journals such as *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, *Archives of Biochemistry and Biophysics*, *Molecular and General Genetics*, *Journal of Bacteriology*, *Experimental Cell Research*, *Biochemistry International*, *Experientia*, *Plant and Cell Physiology*, *Archives of Microbiology*, and *Genetical Research*.

Queena N. Lee-Chua
Math Department
Ateneo de Manila University

Pinoy Television: The Story of ABS-CBN. Edited by Thelma Sioson-San Juan. Quezon City: ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. 1999, 208 pp.

A visually stunning book that is fascinated more by the phenomenon of television than its process, ABS-CBN's *Pinoy Television: The Story of ABS-CBN* is the glossy, concise history of local television as distilled through the ABS-CBN experience. It is many things all at once, and it is important to note early that it is not everything. *Pinoy Television* is not a warts-and-all profile of the country's largest media corporation. Leave that to other authors and other books.

Instead, *Pinoy Television* is an exultant combination of many things: part Lopez family biography, industry archive, literary anthology and ode to the company, but for the most part, a pleasant, informative read as well as an important resource book. It just might be, despite inborn limitations, the most significant Filipino book on television in the recent past.

"Now, TV is the most pervasive, most influential instrument of mass communication—our shaper of dreams and imaginations, our maker of myths. TV is top voyeur, fearless eyewitness, town crier and gossip. TV commiserates in our sorrow, shares our joy, acts as our jury, judge and executioner. TV connects us to the world in real time, and disconnects us from our humdrum selves during airtime," writes Enrico Santos, immediately and accurately defining television's power and reach in the present time and place.

Thoroughly researched and well-written, *Pinoy Television* offers reader-friendly profiles of ABS-CBN players such as Geny Lopez, Gabby Lopez, and Freddie Garcia. It reconstructs the company's own life story, tracing how, as the television industry was in its infancy, the Alto Broadcasting Corporation and the Chronicle Broadcasting Network (see those initials?) eventually became the media giant that it is today.

Pinoy Television divides television's history into four parts: from its birth (1953 to 1972), the turmoil of martial law (1972 to 1986), the expectant time of EDSA, and the future. The book presents an illuminating portrait of the

Originally published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 15 May 2000.

company's rise while also paying attention to some of the changes in the industry around it. It records such important developments as the Big News' relevance, RBS (later GMA) 7's rise to prominence, and the invasion of canned shows such as "CHiPs." At the end of the book, "Pinoy Television" offers a useful timeline of the important developments in local television history. It also pays homage to the creative people who have played a part in TV's history with a cluster of short, finely-chiseled portraits: Bob "Uncle Bob" Stewart, Joe Quirino, Mitos Villareal, Ading Fernando, Al Quinn, Louie Beltran, Menardo Jimenez, Ariel Ureta, Tito Vic & Joey, Inday Badiday, German Moreno, Che-che Lazaro, and such iconic ABS-CBN personalities as Charo Santos-Concio, Tina Monzon-Palma, Noli de Castro and Dolphy, who rightfully graces the book's lovely wrap-around cover. The book scatters little factoids of interesting trivia all throughout, carrying such items of information as the longest-running local shows (among current shows, the winners would be "Kwarta o Kahon" and "TV Patrol"). Generations of boob-tube believers waded in with what television has given them. Jose Dalisay, Jr. says he received "the exhilarating realization that life had many channels, and that something worth working for the power to turn the knob." There are other compelling tributes to the set from JJ Calero, Emily Abrera, and Angelo Rodriguez Lacuesta.

Yet if there is something that almost overpowers the book's writing, it is the extraordinary array of photographs. Harking back to the early days, the book offers a glimpse of those days with stills from shows such as "Tawag ng Tanghalan," "John en Marsha," "Superstar," and "Spin-a-Win." There is even a photograph of Alma Moreno in her trademark tanga, and one of a fresh-faced Vilma Santos with Edgar "Bobot" Mortiz. Looking at these riveting photos, one seems to be traveling back through time. One wishes, though, that there were more pictures about then and then pictures about now, as the grainy, sometimes barely visible photographs sometimes have more power than the slick new ones. There is, however, an interesting set of photographs that constitute a behind-the-scenes look at the company's popular shows. The visual power of those images make the reader feel like he holds the power of the picture tube in his hands, as if one were flipping through memory itself.

Ultimately, the book touches on the prospects and problems facing the medium. The last chapter, dealing with merchandising and new horizons, hints at the promise—and prospective problems—the medium faces. Director Floy Quintos writes, "As we face a new century, we return to the old question: Are we creating meaningful television for the future or just slick shows that, in the end, dull the sensitivities of a nation?" Critic Nestor Torre says, "Only when these channels' left hands know what their right hands are doing, and learn to act decisively and positively as one, shall Philippine television come into its own."

Taking that thought to heart, readers can then appreciate *Pinoy Television* for the impressive piece of work that it is. Accepting its relative limitations, one can then hail ABS-CBN's accomplished, transcendent self-portrait that is *Pinoy Television* as another step toward a definitive history of the popular and powerful medium, as well as a testimony to the company's lasting impact on the industry. Beyond that, the book is a luxurious, rousing celebration of television and what it means to Filipinos who stay tuned—and who believe in its power—everyday.

Ruel S. De Vera
Department of Communication
Ateneo de Manila University