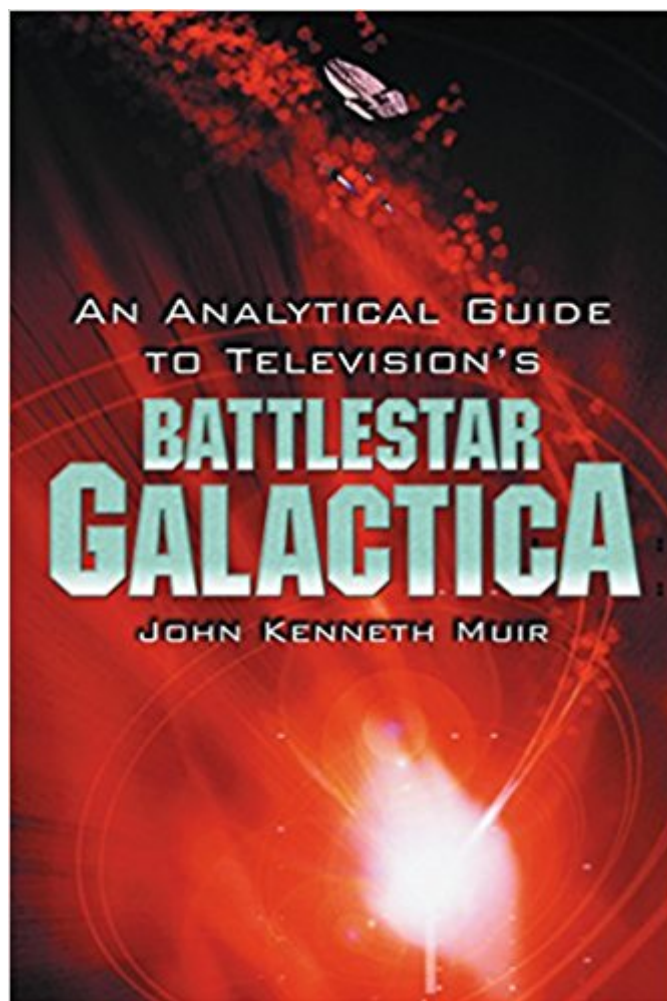


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An Analytical Guide To Television's Battlestar Galactica



Synopsis

When the space drama Battlestar Galactica debuted on ABC in 1978, it was expected to be the most popular new program of the year. Instead, it was attacked as a Star Wars rip-off and canceled after a mere 17 stories. The author acknowledges the show was full of dramatic clichés and scientific inaccuracies, but despite these shortcomings, Battlestar Galactica was a dramatically resonant series full of unique and individual characters, such as Commander Adama (Lorne Greene) and ace warrior Captain Apollo (Richard Hatch). The author contends that Battlestar Galactica was a memorable attempt to make science fiction accessible to mainstream television audiences. The brilliant work of artist John Dykstra brought a new world of special effects to network television. Battlestar Galactica also skillfully exploited legends and names from both the Bible and ancient mythology, which added a layer of depth and maturity to the weekly drama.

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Customer Reviews

As a classic BG fan I was very happy with this book. The only problem is that it needs to be updated badly. In the world of Battlestar Galactica 1999 was and is a very long time ago now.

John Kenneth Muir has authored a superb analysis of the Battlestar Galactica TV series, noting the show's many critics, its strong audience pull, and so forth. He analyzes all 17 of the show's episodes, explores some of the behind-the-scenes production problems, and offers the strengths and weaknesses of the overall show and individual episodes. Muir's theme is that Galactica, warts and all, was nonetheless an entertaining and thought-provoking series that didn't deserve the kind of criticisms it got from the likes of sci-fi author David Gerrold and horror author Stephen King - Muir reprints blasts by those two and others against the show, blasts that display the ever-indefensible strain of elitist snobbery distressingly common to sci-fi. Muir's strongest insight lies in his analysis of the show's hawkish view of war-and-piece issues. Sci-fi tends to be drearily pacifistic, based not on any realworld context but on sheer myth. Battlestar Galactica was different, and remains such even today. The show's hawkish philosophy is based on what has happened in the real world, not on the dreams of pacifists. Galactica's viewpoint has been repeatedly verified throughout history; where, for instance, can the one-world pacific viewpoint of Star Trek be verified in the real world? There are naturally areas where one can disagree with Mr. Muir - his analyses of the episodes Lost Planet Of The Gods and Gun On Ice Planet Zero are absurdly harsh; in GOIPZ he repeats the valid but misunderstood criticism that the Fleet could have simply bypassed the Cylon-armed planetoid, never realizing that the Fleet is in effect surrounded by Cylon base stars and cannot do such an end-run - and he overanalyzes cliches within the show, such as the court-martial cliche used in Murder On The Rising Star. Muir's overall analysis, though, is spot-on. He recognizes Battlestar Galactica as an enjoyable and thought-provoking series, and includes a list of ten recommended changes for revival of the series. Some of these recommended changes have found their way into the SCI-FI Network's well-made reimagining of Galactica, and Muir's recommended changes can serve as rules to be applied to any film genre - the bad-guys-who-can't-shoot-straight cliche in particular has to be changed. Before the SCI-FI Network's series, many of these recommendations were employed in the Maximum Press and Realm Press versions of Galactica and in Richard Hatch's novels. It all proves the durability of a sci-fi series wrongly dismissed then and later.

This book is a detailed analysis (with some author bias) regarding Battlestar Galactica, but not its [dumb] offspring, Galactica 80. It goes into many things from the creation of the show to an episode guide to a look at the many legal problems and issues with Star Wars. I like the author's take on the Star Wars vs. Galactica mess. He does have a point regarding copying. If Kurosawa and the creator of Flash Gordon used Lucas' logic then all the profits from Star Wars should go to them...His

analysis of each episode is actually pretty good. He doesn't shy away from calling a number of episodes dogs especially the cowboy in space junk. Not everything that Glen Larson did regarding Galactica turned to gold. My only problem was that he over emphasizes the importance of both BG and Space 1999 in SF TV. I think that in terms of visuals, BG and Space made a difference in SFX and how they were done on TV (no more Salt Shakers and styrofoam sets!) As for writing? No, because it wasn't all that good. If both shows had better writing then they wouldn't have been canned after two years, but that is just my opinion.

Having been a Battlestar Galactica fan since childhood, and getting a degree in Astrophysics as an adult, I could readily identify with the author calling this show a "Guilty Pleasure". He understood perfectly how the audience can forgive technical inaccuracies when there are strong characters we care about. The book is the best I've ever seen done about a television series. It is much more than just an episode guide. It gives the details about the real world into which Battlestar Galactica was born, what earlier shows influenced it and what it, in turn, may have influenced. It also looks at the merchandising, fan community and state of the revival movement. The only reason I did not give this book 5 stars is that it was missing two things. (1) Most of the fan community is aware of several scripts that were approved and ready to be shot when the show was canceled. I thought these scripts should have been included in any thorough analysis of the show. (2) This book was really just a very complete literature search. There was no new information, outside of the author's commentary, that hadn't already been published. I was surprised that no interviews were conducted with any of the actors, producers, writers, etc. involved with the show. Overall, I can highly recommend this book for any Battlestar Galactica fan. It will bring back many memories and make you wish for a second season.

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