Beverly Hills 90210 Encyclopedia Article

Beverly Hills 90210

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Beverly Hills 90210

Premiering in October 1990, television teen drama *Beverly Hills 90210* became a cultural phenomenon, both in the United States and abroad, and was the precursor to the deluge of teen-based dramas that were to dominate prime-time television in the late 1990s. The show helped to establish the new Fox Television Network, and was the first network to challenge the traditional big three—ABC, CBS, and NBC—for the youth audience.

The title of the program refers to the location of its setting, the posh city of Beverly Hills, California (zip code 90210). Produced by Aaron Spelling, the program focused on a group of high school students. The ensemble cast, featured Jason Priestly (twice nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Actor in a TV Series—Drama in 1993 and 1995), Shannon Doherty, Jennie Garth, Luke Perry, Tori Spelling, Ian Ziering, and Gabrielle Carteris. They were catapulted into the realm of teen idols (despite the fact that most were in their twenties), and their images graced publications and commercial products. Because of the setting, the program presented glamorous lifestyles and paid great attention to fashion, an aspect which was not lost on its audience, who followed clothing, music, and hairstyle trends.

The cast of *Beverly Hills 90210.*

Much of the show's appeal has been attributed to the story lines, which presented issues and concerns relevant to its teenage audience: parental divorce, eating disorders, learning disabilities, sexuality, substance abuse, and date rape. As the actors aged, so did their characters, and by the sixth season several were attending the fictitious California University, encountering more adult problems and issues. Although the show was praised for tackling such important, and often controversial, teen issues in a serious manner, many found the program problematic because it upheld narrowly defined concepts of physical beauty, presented a luxurious world of upper-class materialism, rarely included people of color, and constructed the problems presented in unrealistic terms.

Further Reading:

McKinley, E. Graham. *Beverly Hills 90210: Television, Gender, and Identity.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1997.

Simonetti, Marie-Claire. "Teenage Truths and Tribulations across Cultures: Degrassi Junior High and Beverly Hills 90210." *Journal of Popular Film and Television.* Vol. 22, Spring 1994, 38-42.