The Benny Hill Show Encyclopedia Article

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The Benny Hill Show

English comic Benny Hill became an international celebrity with his schoolboy brand of lecherous, burlesque humor. Bringing the tradition of the British vaudeville to television in 1955, the pudgy Hill hosted comedy series for the BBC and Thames Television over a period of thirty-four years. Featuring slapstick and sight gags, *The Benny Hill Show* always had a sexual energy, bursting with plenty of double-entendres and leggy starlets. The show was edited for worldwide syndication and became a cult phenomenon in the United States beginning in 1979. American audiences quickly identified Red Skelton as a main source of inspiration (Hill borrowed Skelton's closing line, "Good night, God bless"); but there was little sentimentality in the ribaldry of Hill's characters. Hill was always criticized for his sexist obsessions, and his series in England was finally cancelled in 1989 because of complaints from the moral right and the politically correct left. Hill died three years later, and, although English audiences voted him "Funniest Man in the World" several times, he thought he never received the critical recognition he deserved. But to many, Hill was a genuine comic auteur, writing all his material and supervising every randy shot for his show that was enjoyed in over one hundred countries.

Further Reading:

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Smith, John. *The Benny Hill Story.* New York, St. Martin's, 1989.