

AN AUDIENCE RESEARCH REPORT

(Week 42)

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VR/69/867

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Sex and Violence

Designer: Christopher Thompson

Producer: John Howard Davies and Ian McNaughton

Sunday, 12th October 1969, 11.10-11.35 pm, BBC 1

1. Size of audience (based on results of the Survey of Listening and Viewing).

It is estimated that the audience for this broadcast was 2.9% of the United Kingdom population. Programmes on BBC 2 and ITV at the time were seen by 0.5% and 14.8% (averages).

2. Reaction of audience (based on questionnaires completed by a sample of the audience. This sample, 74 in number, is the 3% of the BBC 1 Viewing Panel who saw all or most of the broadcast).

The reactions of this small sample of the audience were distributed as follows:

A+	A	B	C	C-
%	%	%	%	%
12	37	27	5	19

giving a REACTION INDEX of 55. The first programme in the series gained a figure of 45. By way of comparison, The World of Beachcomber began in January last year with a figure of 56 and the average for that first BBC 2 series was 62.

3. While welcomed by some viewers in the sample audience as a funny, witty and refreshingly 'different' show, Monty Python's Flying Circus clearly had little appeal for others, who found themselves completely out of step with its particular kind of humour.
4. Although readily admitting that it would not be everyone's choice ('the sort of show one either loves or hates') about half the small sample had, it seemed, thoroughly enjoyed the programme. It was, several claimed, quite one of the most amusing and entertaining shows they had seen - inspired 'goon-like' humour that exploited the medium of television to the full, with sketches, cartoon sequences, animated pictures, etc. and, over all, a delicious sense of the ridiculous - 'it is outrageous and I enjoy every minute of it!'
5. According to some, the programme was funny in places but rather too silly in others: the ideas were good but 'something went wrong in the visual telling of them', it was here said and the show as a whole appealed no more than moderately. The remainder - about one in four reporting viewers - responded in an unfavourable, if not, indeed, hostile fashion. It was, they often thought, a 'load of rubbish' - a stupid and, frequently, quite meaningless programme that, far from being funny, was 'one long bore'. When not 'sick', the humour was infantile, it was said (one or two adding that it all seemed so much worse coming as it did immediately after the Omnibus tribute to Sir Malcolm Sargent) and the show failed to raise even a smile - 'I honestly can't remember when I have watched so much tripe!'
6. While finding it particularly hard, in this instance, to separate the performance from the material, most of those reporting would have agreed that those taking part had acquitted themselves well enough, although only John Cleese was mentioned by name. The production, too, would seem to have been quite satisfactory and there was particular praise in some quarters for the speed of the programme and the ingenious use of collage and cartoon effects.