


Life Is Worth Living

<i>Life Is Worth Living</i>	
	
Bishop Sheen in 1956.	
Genre	Religious
Presented by	Bishop Fulton J. Sheen
Theme music composer	Fritz Kreisler
Opening theme	Marche Miniature Viennoise
Country of origin	United States
Language(s)	English
Production	
Camera setup	Multi-camera
Running time	26 minutes
Broadcast	
Original channel	DuMont (1952–1955) ABC (1955–1957)
Picture format	Black-and-white
Audio format	Monaural
Original run	February 12, 1952 – April 8, 1957

Life is Worth Living is an inspirational American television series which ran on the DuMont Television Network from February 12, 1952 to April 26, 1955,^[1] then on ABC until 1957.

Broadcast history

Hosted by Bishop (later Archbishop) Fulton J. Sheen, the series consisted mainly of Sheen speaking to the camera and discussing moral issues of the day, often using blackboard drawings and lists to help explain the topic. When the blackboard was filled he would move to another part of the set, and request one of his "angels" (actually one of the TV crew) to clean the blackboard.^[2]

In 1952, DuMont was searching for programming ideas and put on a series of rotating religious programs with a Protestant minister, a Jewish rabbi, and a Catholic bishop. While the other shows did not catch on, the bishop (Sheen) became an overnight hit, found a sponsor in Admiral television sets, and was DuMont's only Emmy Award winner in its brief period of broadcasting. It also held the distinction of being aired on more stations (169) than any other regularly scheduled DuMont program. *Life Is Worth Living* is believed to have been the most widely viewed religious series in the history of television.^[3]

Prior to *Life Is Worth Living*, Sheen had appeared on the radio program *The Catholic Hour* from 1928 to 1952.^[4] With his hypnotic gaze, disarming smile, and dramatic delivery, Sheen was a natural for television. Airing opposite NBC's highly popular Milton Berle show on Tuesday nights, Sheen was the only person ever to give "Mr. Television", also known as "Uncle Miltie", a run for his money. Sheen drew as many as 10 million viewers each week.^[3]

Sheen and Berle enjoyed a friendly rivalry. Berle is reported to have joked, "We both work for the same boss, 'Sky Chief Supreme'", making reference to a grade of gasoline produced by Texaco, his sponsor. Later, when Sheen won an Emmy, Berle quipped, "He's got better writers - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!" As a take-off on Berle's popular nickname with the public, Sheen once opened his program by saying "Good evening, this is Uncle Fultie."

The charismatic Sheen became one of television's earliest and most unlikely superstars, winning an Emmy Award for "Most Outstanding Television Personality" in 1952. During his acceptance speech he happily borrowed Berle's line, crediting his four writers - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - for his success.^[5]

Sheen often made controversial statements against communism and socialism.^[6] In 1953 an episode of *Life Is Worth Living* consisted of a reading of the burial scene from *Julius Caesar*, with Sheen substituting the names of Stalin, Beria, Malenkov and Vyshinsky for Caesar, Cassius, Marc Antony and Brutus. Sheen dramatically stated "Stalin must one day meet his judgment." One week later, the Russian dictator was dead from a stroke.^[2]

Network change

When DuMont ceased network broadcasting in 1955, Sheen moved his show to ABC, then lectured for a while, and returned to television in 1961 with *The Fulton Sheen Program*, essentially a revival of *Life Is Worth Living*. The show was broadcast on local stations across America until 1968, with the later programs in color.^[2] Times had changed, however, and the 1960s programs did not match the audience of his earlier years. Sheen was later appointed as Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, New York. He died in 1979.

Syndication

Reruns of *Life Is Worth Living* and *The Fulton Sheen Program* continued to circulate as late as the early 1990s on broadcast stations, and are currently televised by EWTN, with new introductions by actor Joseph Campanella. St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, New York owns the copyrights to the series, and The Fulton J. Sheen Company, Inc. owns the licensing rights.

Theme Music

A recording of composer Fritz Kreisler's *Marche Miniature Viennoise* was used as the theme music for *Life Is Worth Living*; albeit no on-screen credit was given for title, composer, or orchestra performing the song. Although Kreisler did record a version of this classical composition, it was arranged at a faster tempo and was therefore not the version used for the series.^[7]

References

- [1] Weiner, Ed; Editors of TV Guide (1992). *The "TV Guide" TV Book: 40 Years of the All-Time Greatest Television Facts, Fads, Hits, and History*. New York: Harper Collins. p. 216. ISBN 0-06-096914-8.
- [2] Brooks, Tim; Marsh, Earle (2007). *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows 1946 - Present* (9th ed.). Ballantine. pp. 789. ISBN 978-0-345-49773-4.
- [3] Weinstein, D. (2004). *The Forgotten Network: DuMont and the Birth of American Television*, p. 156-157. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. ISBN 1-59213-499-8
- [4] *The Catholic Media's Greatest Star*, in the March 2000 *Crisis* magazine
- [5] "About Fulton J. Sheen" (<http://www.bishopsheen.com/store.asp?pid=13501&catid=19766>). BishopSheen.com. 2009. . Retrieved 2009-11-05.
- [6] *The Catholic Media's Greatest Star* in the March 2000 *Crisis* magazine
- [7] <http://andriereufan.com/2008/04/30/may-2008-guestbook-2.aspx>

Bibliography

- David Weinstein, *The Forgotten Network: DuMont and the Birth of American Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004) ISBN 1-59213-245-6
- Alex McNeil, *Total Television*, Fourth edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1980) ISBN 0-14-024916-8
- Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows*, Third edition (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964) ISBN 0-345-31864-1

External links

- *Life Is Worth Living* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211820/>) at the Internet Movie Database
 - *Life is Worth Living* (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=zaa7I44gkgc>) at YouTube
 - *Life is Worth Living* MP3 (<http://www.bishopsheen.excerptsofinri.com/>)
 - DuMont historical website (<http://www.dumonthistory.tv/a1.html>)
-

Article Sources and Contributors

Life Is Worth Living *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=521769913> *Contributors:* 23skidoo, ADM, Angr, Autarch, Avicennasis, Basil and Nigel, Bishopfultonsheen, Blainster, Bolt, Chris the speller, Chrisbox51, Closeapple, Colonies Chris, Daniel Benfield, Deathhawk, Elkman, Evanreyes, Firsfron, Franko1212, HiFiGuy, Igo4U, JASpencer, JGHowes, JGKlein, Jgilhousen, Karenthewriter, Kathleen.wright5, Koavf, MakeRocketGoNow, Mike Halterman, Niteowlneils, Pinkadelica, R'n'B, RMc, Realkyhick, SalomonCeb, Skier Dude, Suddenly There Is a Valley, Tjmayerinsf, Truthanado, We hope, 17 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

File:Bishop Fulton J. Sheen 1956.JPG *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Bishop_Fulton_J._Sheen_1956.JPG *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* ABC Radio

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)
