



# **Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television**

Edwin; Bates, Stephen Diamond

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In this third edition of their classic study of the political commercial, or "polispot," veteran media analysts Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates reveal the backstage stories of the 1988 presidential campaign - the Ailes-Atwater media mastery, the Dukakis team's babel of TV voices, Willie Horton's transformation from convict to celebrity. The authors take a close critical look at the key political ads of 1988 and 1990, with particular attention to the subtexts directed at voters' racial attitudes and fears. They also preview the 30second arguments and attacks of the 1992 media campaign. In a new chapter, Diamond and Bates examine the case against spots. They take a hard look at the societal ills that critics have blamed on TV campaigns, including mudslinging, misrepresentation, and malaise. They evaluate the proposals to ban or severely restrict the spot. They also assess the growing press scrutiny of TV campaigns, such as the use of "truth boxes" in newspapers. Their verdict on political ads will surprise many viewers - and cheer all friends of the First Amendment. As the media consultants and their handiwork grow more subtle and sophisticated, and as political campaigns increasingly exist only on the home screen, The Spot is an indispensable guide for the campaign season. Edwin Diamond is Professor of journalism at New York University, where he directs the News Study Group, and he is the media columnist for New York Magazine. His previous books include The Media Show: The Changing Face of the News, 1985-1990. Stephen Bates, a lawyer, is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. He is the author of If No News, Send Rumors: Anecdotes of American Journalism.



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