



ENGLISH VERSION

Dear press officers, dear platforms,

The French TV Critics Association (ACS), founded in 2015, aims to represent the journalistic branch of this practice and to question its relationships with professionals, whether they are involved in the creation of a series, its production, broadcasting or promotion.

For several years now, we have been experiencing –and regularly condemning– a deterioration in these relationships, particularly with regard to the availability of screeners. These episodes, sometimes unfinished, are sent to us several weeks or days before their broadcast, so that we can prepare articles and/or interviews for publication on the big day. These screeners are not privileges; they are essential if we are to cover the release of your programs properly. And yet...

- Not all journalists are treated equally. Behind the scenes, there is a hierarchical structure in the media that penalizes many colleagues, especially freelancers. It's one thing for your – mainly American– superiors to feel that a media outlet's “prestige” justifies early access to screeners, and to issue you with instructions to that effect. But to have us believe for days, even weeks, that screeners are not available, when we know full well that some colleagues have already received them, is unacceptable.
- We also regret that access to screeners is regularly conditional on interviews: apart from the fact that many media only publish reviews, this blackmail is unacceptable. Another detrimental practice is that screeners are only sent to one (in-house) journalist per newsroom. No matter whether they are unavailable at the time, or whether another journalist wants to review the series. This method penalizes freelancers in particular, who by definition work for several media outlets and are therefore unable to access the program before it is aired, thus preventing them from pitching articles or interviews.
- Yet another development occurred on June 25, when a well-known platform ended up sending out the new season of a highly-anticipated series the day before its release, asking a handful of privileged journalists not to tell their peers about it. We refuse to be complicit in this two-tier system, which pits journalists against each other and puts the most vulnerable among us at risk. We understand that it's not always up to you to decide whether or not to send screeners, but we demand respect and transparency.
- In addition, these episodes are increasingly sent to us at the last minute –sometimes on Saturdays!– and are valid for only 24 or 48 hours. These constraints, in addition to encroaching on our free time, don't allow us to work properly. A season of 6, 8 or 10 episodes can't be viewed in two days, nor should it be watched over the weekend, with an eye on the countdown. What's more, this system, unacceptable for online media, is simply impossible for monthly or weekly publications, which are wrapped up several weeks in advance.



Like film criticism, series criticism is not a hobby, it's our job. Film critics (whose working conditions are also deteriorating) naturally have access to press screenings of movies before their release, and these are not organized on weekends.

These harmful practices show a blatant lack of respect for our profession, and contribute to the deterioration not only of TV criticism in the media –already reduced to a pittance and very poorly remunerated– but also of relations between press officers and journalists.

It's in everyone's interest –journalists, the media, creators, producers and broadcasters– to ensure that we can continue to exercise our profession under good conditions. Professional relations based on transparency, honesty and respect seem to us the bare minimum.

We are willing to discuss the matter and count on you to forward this letter to your counterparts abroad, as well as to your superiors.

The French TV Critics Association

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