



## Gloom & Doom

# At Television Dinner, Fine Wine And Plenty Of Fear

Lacey Rose, 10.22.08, 01:00 PM EDT

**The broadcasting hall of fame's gala last night was a somber affair. For good reason.**

*Broadcasting & Cable* Editor in Chief Ben Grossman opened last night's annual hall of fame event at the Waldorf-Astoria by telling his guests to enjoy the food now because next year's event will likely be held at a nearby Denny's.

Had the room not been filled with buzzing BlackBerrys and constant market mentions, it might have been funny.

Talk of budget cuts, forgone bonuses and tumbling stock prices dominated dinner conversation for the 800 members of the television community gathered to induct 11 industry leaders into *Broadcasting & Cable's* Hall of Fame. Back-slapping is tough to do when ratings are down 16% at News Corp-owned Fox, 14% at General Electric-owned NBC, 10% at ABC and 4% at CBS (nyse: [CBS](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) and the threat of a deep recession looms large.

"I think people are looking for something to celebrate right now," said an upbeat Hall of Fame Chairman Bill McGorry, as he marveled at the steady stream of bold-faced names, including NBC Universal Chief Executive Jeff Zucker, **Time Warner** (nyse: [TWX](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) Chief Executive Jeff Bewkes and a slow-moving *60 Minutes* veteran Andy Rooney, pouring into the cavernous hall.

While *CBS Evening News* anchor and the evening's host Katie Couric opted for an uplifting--or at least lighter--tone, she still found time to knock the broadcast medium's recent performance, claiming it "gets lower ratings than Congress, the president and the *CBS Evening News*." The jab at her own broadcast's meager Nielsen showings was somehow easier for the room to swallow in light of her recent--and highly regarded--dismantling of Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin.

Among the new Hall of Fame entries, or in this case reasons to celebrate: NBC's *Today* co-host Matt Lauer ("What took you so long?" quipped his former co-host, who was inducted several years earlier, as she welcomed him on stage); Fox News Chairman and Chief Executive Roger Ailes (who stood before a sea of blue and said to big laughs: "I wonder if this is how [conservative *View* co-host] Elizabeth Hasselbeck feels?"); and Twentieth Television President Bob Cook (who used the stage time to shamelessly plug new syndication entrées *Prison Break*, *Bones* and *Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?*). Given the economic outlook, no one can fault him for the pitch.