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Piracy In The Motion Picture Industry (review)

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cussion on the oft-made comparisons between Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. Gunning does a nice job of highlighting the differences between the two, making reference to the overt social commentary often seen in Chaplin's films (this is discussed in further detail in William Paul's "Charlie Chaplin and the Annals of Anal-ity") and how this differed from the approach Keaton took in his work. Gunning also speaks to the way each performer used the camera to relate to their audi-

ence, stating "[w]hereas Chaplin used film to create a startling intimacy with his audience, allowing them insight into his most private moments of romantic longing and disappointment . . . Keaton's relation to the audience remained distanced" (74).

Joanna Rapf's fascinating piece entitled "Comic Theory from a Feminist Perspective—A Look at Jerry Lewis" begins with a look at femininity, as well as masculinity, in the comedic world: "If women are indeed primal earth mothers, sources of life and order, comfort and reassurance, apple pie, chicken soup, and everything that builds a foundation to give others the strength to grow, the comedy . . . is anathema to the feminin" (146). Rapf then transitions to examining how Jerry Lewis, through his film work, interprets not only male patriarchy, but "idealized" masculinity in general. According to Rapf, "[Lewis'] flagrant rejection of conventional standards of realistic and narrative expectation, and his ambiguous approach to gender and sexuality all put him in what can only be called an unexpected and surprisingly revolutionary camp" (152).

Part Five of the book, entitled "Post-Classical Comedian Comedy" may have the most resonance for modern-day moviegoers. Bambi Haggins, in her piece "Laughing Mad—The black comedian's place in American comedy of the post-Civil Rights era" effectively traces the history of black comedians since the 1960s. Beginning with Dick Gregory, Bill Cosby and Richard Pryor, Haggins outlines the rise of each of these performers and the adaptations each made during their careers to either conform to the mainstream, or reject it. Haggins uses the term "negotiating blackness and the mainstream" (73).

Haggins then turns to "the next generation" which includes performers such as Eddie Murphy and Chris Rock, comparing this "next" generation to the previous generation of Pryor, Murphy and Cosby. Is Murphy the true "air apparent" to Pryor? Is Chris Rock a blend of both Pryor and Gregory or a completely different type of comedian based on the times in which he lives? These are just a few of the questions that Haggins' essay implores the reader to ask. As race and racial identity are inextricably linked to any discussion of the black comedian, Haggins appropriately ends her piece by stating "[a]s long as conventional wisdom dictates that sardonic, cultural critique cannot play well at the Cineplex, the

underbelly of race relations and racial inequity in post-Civil Rights American will not be the stuff of which Hollywood comedies are made. So . . . who is laughing mad now?" (184).

Finally, Philip Drake's piece—"Low Blows? Theorizing performance in post-classical comedian comedy"—focuses on comedian Jim Carrey. By examining Carrey's films such as *Ace Ventura*, *Liar, Liar* and *Me Myself and Irene*, Drake examines such questions as whether films focusing on the physical are part of the "dumbed down" comedic film milieu, what goes into an audience enjoying a comedic "screen performance" and, as Drake states in his piece, "what we mean by 'dumb' performance and what is at stake in its interpretation and critical evaluation" (189). As Drake points out, many comedians who go on to stardom in the film industry, hail from vaudeville, comedy clubs and television. It is often this background, especially that of television, that shapes the nature of the comedian's performance and the familiarity that the comedian's audience has with the performer. Ultimately, Drake questions what influence the audience's own identification with the comedian's star persona has on the lens through which a filmgoer views that star's performance.

Additional essays include Steve Seidman's "Performance Enunciation and Self-reference in Hollywood Comedian Comedy," Mark Winokur's "The Marx Brothers and the Search for the Landsman," Peter Kramer's "Derailing the Honeymoon Express: Comicality and Narrative Closure in Buster Keaton's *The Blacksmith*," and Kathleen Rowe's "She Done Him Wrong: Spectacle and Narrative." There are also contributions from Patricia Mellencamp, Henry Jenkins III, William Paul, Steve Neal, Frank Krutnik and Steven Cohan. The introduction states that the book ". . . illustrates the disparate critical and theoretical projects that have embraced the comedian film in recent years" (1). *The Hollywood Comedians, the Film Reader* accomplishes this and much more.

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Kerry Segrave. Piracy In The Motion Picture Industry.

McFarland, 2003.

\$36.50; 222 pages.

Another Crisis

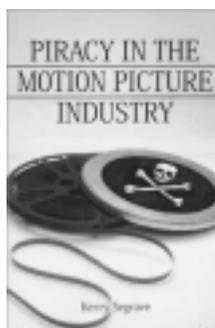
The FBI warning which appears at the beginning of copyrighted videos and DVD's should not be taken lightly. Jack Valenti

and The Motion Picture Association of America he represents would be delighted to have the FBI enter your house, confiscate your purloined movies, and hold your duping equipment as evidence. In 1979, Valenti (always a colorful speaker) told *60 Minutes'* Harry Reasoner that film piracy "is a cancer in the belly of the film business." Kerry Segrave's history of piracy in the motion picture industry was published in 2003 and states in the conclusion that, "Hollywood hit its roughest spot as the VCR and video cassette arrived and became ubiquitous." Now Valenti and the Motion Picture Association of America have another crisis—a really, really rough spot—digital piracy—pirates who sail cyberspace. As Tom Spring of PCWorld.com states, "If you think copying a movie and downloading *The Matrix* from Kaza is okay, Jack Valenti wants a word with you."

In *Piracy In The Motion Picture Industry*, Segrave has comprehensively researched film theft history. The author defines film piracy "as the unauthorized reproduction or use of motion pictures." He, of course, acknowledges that there is nothing new under the sun, and begins his research (There is a footnote at the end of every paragraph, and in the preface, Segrave credits *Variety* as a major source of information.) by recounting the offenses of vaudevillian appropriators who incorporated parts of another entertainer's acts or simply replicated the entire act. Georgie Jessel, W.C. Fields, Harry Houdini, George Burns, Bob Hope, Jack Benny and Fred Allen are the more familiar names of those who either stole, were stolen from, or both.

In an open letter to *Variety*, Bert Lahr once accused Joe E. Brown of having stolen the Lahr character. The book's first chapter discusses many of these transgressions and the entertainers' attempts, employing legal means as well as peer pressure, to force the imitators to cease and desist. Songs and entire acts were stolen from British entertainers and brought across the Atlantic to enjoy great success in the United States. American audiences were usually unaware that what they were seeing and hearing was not entirely original material. Also, vaudeville theaters often hired lesser-known and less expensive entertainers to perform the acts of more famous and more expensive performers. According to Segrave, these cases, many of them legal, are reported in detail in *Variety*.

As soon as motion pictures appeared, thieves devised a variety of ways to make money illegally from the new form of entertainment. During the silent era, "bicycling" was a popular form of film larceny: "An exhibitor who had rented a film legitimately for a period of time, say, one week at a fixed sum of dollars, would try to screen the print for an extra day or two at the beginning or end of his run. Or the cinema owner would rent the movie for one of his theatres and then screen it illegally at another theater he



owned." Also common was the practice of two different theater owners trading and sharing legally rented movies for illegal screenings. Hollywood studios fought back by employing "checkers" who attended film screenings to detect these unauthorized, unpaid-for showings.

Often copies of motion pictures were actually, physically stolen, frequently while they were in transport; sometimes dishonest projectionists "borrowed" films and reproduced them. One category of film outlaw was known as a "jackrabbit." This style of larceny was limited to the 1930's and 40's and involved exhibitors who traveled a circuit screening films. Even if these "jackrabbits" had legitimately rented the titles, they regularly profited from unreported screenings.

A different manner of crime against film began when TV wanted to reshow old Hollywood movies. In the beginning, studios sold their libraries by the foot, and TV edited films to suit the allotted time slots. One example Segrave related dealt with a film editor at WMAL-TV in Washington D.C. His job was to insert commercials and cut films' running time to fit the format. The editor admitted that he "'hacked several hundred films to pieces.'" For example, *The Train* (1965, Burt Lancaster), which ran for 143 minutes in theaters, was cut by 53 minutes! Segrave quotes journalist Bill Greely: "None but the true hack could fail to be upset by the gutting of features for TV . . ." In 1965, Billy Wilder's *Stalag 17* was telecast on NBC—interrupted nine times for commercials hawking thirty-one different products. The Director's Guild of America got involved. Otto Preminger and George Stevens complained early and loudly about the mutilation of motion pictures by TV editors. Published in 1972, *The Unkindest Cut* discussed the arbitrary cutting of lengthy films. Eventually a legion of Hollywood directors including Steven Spielberg and George Lucas protested the disfigurement of their artistic creations.

Hollywood's worst nightmare began, however, with videotapes. Pirates make millions from illegally reproduced tapes and DVD's, both in the U.S and abroad. One foreign pirate reported he could make more money selling tapes than he could from selling cocaine. Apparently, it is not uncommon for foreign audiences to see pirated Hollywood films before they are even released in the United States. Countries with the most egregious record of offenses are (or have been) the UK, China, and Italy; however, practically every nation in the world—Brazil, India, Mexico, Thailand, and Malaysia, to mention only a few—harbors pirates.

Segrave's history of piracy in motion pictures appears to be meticulously researched and the author does not intrude into this research; he merely reports. Therefore, the book reads very much like an academic report. *Piracy In the Motion Picture Industry* recounts cases and gives accounts of related legal issues surrounding the pirating of copyrighted photodramas, including a high profile court case involving the private film library of Roddy McDowell. The book is full of out-of-the ordinary facts about America's favorite movies and the FBI's mission to enforce the

copyright law. For any scholar interested in the history of film piracy, Segrave's book is a well of information.

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Chris Holmlund.
***Impossible Bodies: Femininity
and Masculinity at the Movies.***

Routledge, 2002.
237 pages; \$26.50 softcover.

Murky Relativism

Chris Holmlund's *Impossible Bodies* begins with the statement that "Hollywood films shape and express how we see—or don't see—our bodies, our selves" and continues with "in the last two decades, dramatic changes have occurred" (3). Beginning with this premise, Holmlund examines some of Hollywood's "impossible bodies" hoping to find some of the meanings behind—and, no less importantly, the pleasures audiences receive from—them. Although all of the bodies Holmlund examines are impossible, in that they are unattainable for most of us, some become acceptable within Hollywood as "more 'proper,' more 'natural,' [and] more 'common' than others," and Holmlund questions why this occurs (4). Throughout, Holmlund resists the easy or pat answer to that question, preferring instead to retain the ambiguity of real-life audience readings and, indeed, the ambiguity of the texts themselves. At the same time, her clear and direct writing style keeps the reader from getting needlessly tangled in murky relativism.

The first section of the book, "Gesturing toward Genres," includes chapters on the Pumping Iron series, what she terms "the mainstream (lesbian) femme film" and nouveaux westerns. Although these genres would not seem to have much in common, Holmlund points out how each highlights contemporary American views on race, class, gender, age and sexuality. "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal," the first chapter in this section, focuses on the ways in which the Pumping Iron series explicitly views the body as a text and "reveal(s) how the visible differences of sex (to have or have not) and race (to be or not to be) mesh with ideology and economy in contemporary American society" (17). In other words, she finds that, within the films, the visible differences of race are sometimes acceptable when they uphold the divide between femininity and masculinity. Along the way, Holmlund looks at the lingering myth of the natural body, the different ways male and female bodybuilders are "gazed upon" and the interplay of economics with gender (and sexual) roles.

In the second part of *Impossible Bodies*, "Siding with Sidekicks," Holmlund writes about "Hollywood's Deadly (Lesbian) Dolls," the "Swede as 'Other'" and Latinas' constricted roles in mainstream film. The strongest chapter in this section, "Crusin' for a Bruisin': Hollywood's Deadly (Lesbian) Dolls," considers the emergence of a cycle of films featuring the lesbian as sexy female killer. In this chapter, Holmlund examines the fact that "audiences are both fascinated by, yet uncomfortable with, violent women... [and] a murmured fear of lesbianism lurks beneath the general discomfort with violent women" (74-5). Throughout the chapter, Holmlund argues that "the entire cycle's obsession with death, dying and lethal lovelies masks a more deep-seated denial of age and aging" (75). While asserting this, Holmlund also examines different reactions to this genre by diverse audiences, moving from the mainstream press to lesbian and gay publications. These audiences' reactions vary greatly, from the wildly positive to the completely negative, and Holmlund does an excellent job of showing the different contexts behind these readings rather than championing one over another as more "correct." She writes, "I consider it urgent that queer and feminist responses emerge from the straitjackets of mainstream models. Like other activists-critics, I believe that protests based on 'positive' images and/or 'true' representations have severe limitations. 'Positive' images are not positive for everyone, and 'truth' is very much in the eye of the beholder" (88).

In the last section, "Staring at Stars," Holmlund looks at the star body as text, examining the bodies and careers of Whoopi Goldberg, Clint Eastwood and Dolly Parton. In each, Holmlund points out the conflicting meanings different communities have taken from these stars. The chapter on Whoopi Goldberg "explores why and how Whoopi has succeeded where other African-American women have not, though controversy often surrounds her" (127). "The Aging Clint" observes how Eastwood has managed to remain successful as he ages, examining the generic conventions of the western, the gender double standard that allows men to age visibly and the fact that "age, not gender, will identify the system's next market" (144). Finally, Holmlund looks at the multifaceted meanings behind Dolly Parton's career as a star beloved by fundamentalist Christians and the gay and lesbian communities alike. In Parton, she finds the star who best embodies the Hollywood goal of becoming all things to all people.

Throughout, Holmlund's study serves as a model of how to avoid the easy answer while remaining clear and understandable. While Holmlund maintains the multiplicity of Hollywood texts, she also resists the plunge into relativity, showing how context shapes the readings that different audiences produce. *Impossible Bodies* is a valuable work for anyone interested in depictions of the body in film, and all of the glorious messiness that entails.

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