Fabricating the Absolute Fake - revised edition

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When rock star Bono told Oprah Winfrey that America is an ideal that is supposed to be contagious, the talk show host was moved to tears. Such an imagined America, rather than the nation-state USA, is the topic of Fabricating the Absolute Fake. Pop and politics become intertwined, as Hollywood, television, and celebrities spread the American Dream around the world. Using concepts such as the absolute fake and karaoke Americanism, the book examines this global mediation as well as the way America is appropriated in pop culture produced outside of the USA, as demonstrated by such diverse cultural icons as the Elvis-inspired crooner Lee Towers and the Moroccan-Dutch rapper Ali B. This revised and extended edition includes a new chapter on Barack Obama and Michael Jackson as global celebrities and a new afterword on teaching American pop culture.

Jaap Kooijman is Associate Professor in Media Studies and American Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

“A brilliant, thoroughly enjoyable work of cultural critique. Fabricating the Absolute Fake takes seemingly exhausted concepts like ‘Americanization’ and turns them on their head. Refusing simple binaries between the fake and the authentic, or between cultural imperialism and native resistance, Kooijman demonstrates just how flexible the signifiers of Americanness can be when they circulate globally.”

Anna McCarthy, Cinema Studies, New York University

“Most daring and persuasive is Kooijman’s ability to move between and connect the most delicious pop and the most searing political events (9/11, the murder of Pim Fortuyn), never evading the seriousness of entertainment nor the spectacle of politics. A book that is a pleasure for what it conveys of its subject and for its intellectual rigor, managing to be at once subtle and straightforward, complex and lucid.”

Richard Dyer, Film Studies, King’s College London

“Fabricating the Absolute Fake shows that pop culture is more than ephemeral entertainment. When looked at with Kooijman’s cosmopolitan eye, pop culture can be seen as a continuing ritual in celebration of national identities, America’s identity for sure, but also, intriguingly, a Dutch or even European sense of self.”

Rob Kroes, American Studies, University of Amsterdam