

The Projector: A Journal on Film, Media, and Culture
CFP: Everything is Media Now

A year of pandemic home media viewing has escalated ongoing shifts in how audiences encounter and conceptualize film, television, and other media forms. It has also foregrounded the ways in which decades of media conglomeration, combined with what Henry Jenkins first identified in 2006 as media convergence, have increasingly eroded the once-distinct differences between these formats in terms of form, content, the industries that produce them, and both the platforms and the viewing practices that audiences utilize to consume them. Indeed, all these forms of mass-distributed cultural production are increasingly grouped and classified together as either “visual media” or “entertainment media.”

It is estimated that video streaming constituted 82% of internet traffic in 2020, but that figure, while partly reflective of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on media consumption, is also indicative of larger trends that pre-date the pandemic. In 2018, video sharing site Tik-Tok became the most downloaded app in the U.S. In 2019, Netflix streaming represented 12.6% of global downstream internet traffic and YouTube accounted for 35% of worldwide mobile internet use.

At the same time, The Los Angeles Film Critics Association named Steve McQueen’s five-part series *Small Axe* the Best Film of 2020, a designation complicated by the fact that, though advertised as an anthology film series, it was produced by British television network BBC One, on which it was also initially released in the U.K. before expanding to streaming distribution in the U.S. via Amazon Prime. Digitally distributed indie films *Minari* (Lee Isaac Chung) and *Nomadland* (Chloë Zhao) are likewise among the 2021 film awards favorites. This is a notable change after the objections that were raised just two years earlier in the wake of Oscar wins for Netflix-produced *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018) that it should not have even been nominated by the Motion Picture Academy because it was a “TV movie” and not a film.

“Film or television? Who cares?”—the title of Glenn Whipp and Justin Chang’s *Los Angeles Times* article on the best film award given to *Small Axe*—captures the focus of this special issue. The journal is looking for research on (1) developments in the now-inextricably-converged media entertainment industry as it turns to digital platforms; (2) emerging opportunities for media-makers to create diverse content within the context of both the proliferation of digital platforms and the increased demand for content on those platforms; and (3) salient aspects of how audiences access and experience contemporary media.

Topics might include but are not limited to:

Industrial, cultural, and/or technological dimensions of declining movie ticket sales, as well as parallels with previous historical developments related to broadcast television, cable television, and home video.

Industrial, cultural, and/or technological dimensions of cord cutting, declining ratings/viewership for live TV on both broadcast and cable networks, as well as the fact that, while streaming service subscriptions and usage both increased at the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, live television viewing, except for news programming, did not.

Intersections between and parallels with these developments in the film, TV, and gaming industries and those impacting the music industry, as well as the performing arts sector.

Corporate conglomeration, “synergy,” and transmedia storytelling.

The blurring of the boundaries between narrative television, film, digital media, and videogame content in terms of narrative structure, form, visual aesthetic, and/or modes of spectatorship.

The streaming wars and the increasing stratification of streaming content, including the expansion of streaming services into media production, as well as the expansion of movie studios and TV networks into streaming service providers.

Media as part of an increasingly “consumer-friendly” digital world that prioritizes on-demand content and consumption.

Streaming platform algorithms, suggested user content, and the nichification of both media content and media access, including historical parallels to the nichification of both movie and television content, movie release patterns, TV programming scheduling, and the targeted advertising of films, broadcast TV series, and cable TV series.

Analyses of the ways in which expanded options for media viewing facilitated by the proliferation of streaming platforms has both provided new opportunities for the production and distribution of diverse content (including media both featuring and created by members of underrepresented communities) and narrowed opportunities for audiences to both find and view that content.

U.S. government regulation of the film and TV industries, the Internet, and streaming platforms, including shifting anti-trust legislation and enforcement, censorship practices (through the MPAA Certification and Ratings Administration, TV Network Standards and Practices Divisions, the FCC, etc.), and ongoing political and legal battles over net neutrality

Digital media consumption and labor conditions (e.g., connections between precarious and gig-economy labor, unpredictable schedules, and “on-demand” entertainment)

Initial deadline: January 1, 2022 – with submissions accepted until June 1, 2022

Consult the journal’s format and submission guidelines before submitting material:

<https://www.theprojectorjournal.com/submission-guidelines>

Send submissions to Cynthia Baron cbaron@bgsu.edu and Roz Sibielski rsibielski@ric.edu

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