John Hill en Martin McLoone (red.)
Big picture, small screen. The relations between film and television
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Relations between the film and television industries have never been easy. The history of this relationship in the us provides an extreme example: The film industry, after investing in radio and television technologies in the late 1920s, grew increasingly wary of television's competitive potential. By the mid-1940s, film industry paranoia was intensified by the triple threat of the 'Paramount' decrees (ending studio control over exhibition), declining box-office returns (reflecting rapidly changing audience demographics), and the breakdown of Hollywood's all important social networks (one of the many disastrous side-effects of the Cold War).

Remarkably, however, it was the relatively new television medium which received full credit for causing the film industry's misery – this, despite the fact that the television industry was in its infancy. Only in the 1960s and early 1970s did Hollywood realise just how crucial television could be in terms of restoring prosperity to the floundering film industry, a realisation that took on a whole new meaning in the following two decades. Corporate mergers subsumed film and television interests into much larger wholes, and textual elements such as James Bond and the Batman circulated through media conglomerates' various divisions in film, video, cd, cd-rom, and print form. Just as important as the new corporate environment, new digital technologies for production, distribution and exhibition blurred the boundaries between the once distinct media, further obscuring the autonomy of film and television.

The situation in Europe, thanks to smaller scale, domestically-oriented film industries and broadcasting environments firmly in government hands, was less extreme than that in the us. But the larger economic realities of new technological and cultural practices, stimulated by cable and satellite television services, made themselves felt with equal impact. Whether in the us or Europe, interdependency quickly emerged as a central element in both media. But one example of the new relationship between film and television could be found in changing revenue patterns. John Hill points to a 1955 study by Goldman-Sachs showing that the theatrical release of films generated 67% of the studios' revenues in 1980 as compared with 1994, where this sector produced only 24%. Revenues from video increased in this same period from 1% to 46.4%. Such dynamic movement between two media with distinctive institutional histories, distribution systems, and conditions of reception was bound to produce its share of opportunities and tensions, and it is this spectrum of topics which the collection of essays edited by Hill and Martin McLoone addresses.

The nineteen essays trace an unsteady course among the discourses of Hollywood (particularly for international financial figures), the inevitable presence of Hollywood programming, and the realities of the British and Irish production and exhibition scene. Ostensibly organised around two thematic clusters, history and aesthetics and economics, production, and technology, the essays take a wide-ranging set of approaches to the relationship under study. A chronological analysis of film-television relations frames the essays, opening with Peter Kramer's essay on the history of film-television relations within the us and concluding with Dan Fleming's essay on the role of new technologies in reshaping the media scene of the near future. A more presentist approach takes comparative national conditions as its topic, exploring relations between the two media in the us and in the UK an Ireland. Thanks to essays on film and television in England (John Hill), Scotland (Andrea Calderwood), Wales (Dave Berry), Northern Ireland (Robert

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Cooper) and Ireland (Ed Guiney), the complexities of national identity enjoy a generally coherent and well-rounded discussion. The collection draws upon a range of expertise, from familiar academic talents (such as Charles Barr, John Ellis, John Caughie) to leading figures in the industry (including Michael Grade, CEO, Irish Film Board; and Mark Shivas, head of films at the BBC). Further nuance is provided by the very different vantage points of the essays, some focusing on auteurs active in both media such as Stephen Frears (John Hill) and Verity Lambert (Sarah Edge), some on corporate vision (the BBC and Channel Four in rather predictable corporate terms through their aforementioned representatives), some on program form (television programs about the cinema by Paul Kerr and live television drama by Charles Barr), and some on the issue of media identity (McLoone on film and television aesthetics and Ellis on media representational capacity through an extended and insightful reading of the film Speed).

With such a wide range of approaches and voices, the collection provides a useful compendium of insights into the kinds of production and distribution problems familiar to most European film- and television-makers. As a group, the essays attempt to reconcile the divergent aesthetic needs of the 'big picture' and 'small screen', balance the demands of two distinctive institutional and economic systems, and find ways of addressing different audience expectations. But while much of the volume attempts to sort out these differences, perhaps the most striking element in the collection as a whole is the articulation of the autonomous character of the two media. Film's richer visual capacities, the considerably different environments in which film and television are viewed, and above all television's ability to exploit liveness and immediacy whether in dramatic or actuality programming, emerge repeatedly as elements to be savoured and developed.

The genesis of the book was a 1994 forum on the relations between film and television held at the University of Ulster, where editors Hill and McLoone and authors Fleming and Edge all teach. As a collection, the essays would have benefited from deeper integration and cross-reference of the different viewpoints, and an index would enhance the book's utility. All in all, however, the diversity of the essays and their general focus on the UK and Ireland make this a useful contribution to understanding film and television's relations.

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