

HBO's Cinematized Television

By Erin Hill and Brian Hu

Picking up where John Caldwell left off in his discussion of post-network permutations of style and narrative in 1995's [Televisuality](#), Erin Hill and Brian Hu discuss HBO's forging of a unique brand of quality through its original series beginning in the 90's. HBO not only increasingly chose for its original programs the filmic look first pioneered by network shows like [Miami Vice](#) and [Hill Street Blues](#), but, through strategies such as widescreen formatting, the production of prestige properties, and the appropriation of authors and genres strongly associated with film, the cable network also aimed increasingly at obtaining for its programming the high culture status that had previously been reserved for only the greatest and most critically acclaimed works of cinematic art. The channel's success in thus defining itself as something above and beyond television (not TV but HBO), in turn, had an effect on network and basic cable narrative and aesthetics from which it had attempted to distinguish itself, causing the cinematic envelope to be pushed further and in more ways than ever before through attempts at "Quality" (a.k.a. film-like) programming.



Author bios:

Erin Hill is a PhD candidate in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.



Brian Hu is a PhD candidate in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. His dissertation is on cosmopolitanism in Chinese popular culture, and his writings on cinema have appeared in [Screen](#), [Post Script](#), and [Continuum](#).