

In This Issue (Spring 2008)

Welcome to the Spring 2008 issue of [Mediascape](#)! We are proud to present the first issue in our totally revamped website, that allows for some exciting new features (video! photos! comments! oh my!) that will hopefully enhance your experience of the journal.

In this issue, two of our sections — “Features” and “Reviews” — investigate different issues related to the theme of comedy. Why comedy? Well, for one thing, comedy is a rather marginalized subject matter in the sometimes-stiff, all-too-serious world of academic publishing. Can legitimate scholars truly analyze the comedic text, understand the genre’s current status, or—dare we suggest it— even *write* in an irreverent, comical manner while still maintaining the requisite straight face of ivory tower *gravitas*? We would like to suggest that yes, comedy can and should be the subject of our academic inquiry. Indeed, as scholars of cinema, television, and new media, we cannot avoid this vast, largely unexplored territory. Comedy, after all, is ubiquitous in any *mediascape* we might survey.

Comedies are increasingly potent at the box office, with films from the likes of Judd Apatow and Will Ferrell increasingly representing some of Hollywood’s most bankable generic fare. In the “Features” section of this issue of [Mediascape](#), Peter Alilunas’s “Male Masculinity as the Celebration of Failure: The Frat Pack, Women, and the Trauma of Victimization in the ‘Dude Flick,’” examines this current “frat pack” cycle of films in terms of shifting constructions of male masculinity. Whereas Alilunas reads current comedies as evocative of contemporary instabilities in gender, Joshua Moss, in his piece “[Historiography of the World Part 1: The Jewish Body, Historical Crisis and The Comedic Farce](#),” interprets specific boundary-pushing comedians such as Sacha Baron Cohen, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, and Sarah Silverman in the context of their Jewish ethnicities. Also in “Features” is an interesting look at an endangered televisual species: the multi-camera sitcom. Christine Becker focuses her analysis on the hit show, [How I Met Your Mother](#), in her article, “Acting for the Cameras: Performance in the Multi-Camera Sitcom.”

The “Reviews” section features two pieces inspired by comedic texts, one a review of a film and the other of a television show. In her piece, “[The Darjeeling Limited: Critiquing Orientalism on the Train to Nowhere](#),” Nandana Bose offers a thorough critique of Wes Anderson’s latest quirky offering—a film set in India which, she argues, reevaluates traditionally-held notions of Orientalism and exotic *otherness*. In “And Now, Just the News: A Week in the Life of A [Daily Show](#),” Nick Marx looks at Jon Stewart’s popular [Daily Show](#) and its approach to comedy during the 07-08 WGA strike.

Lest we exhaust the comedy theme, our other two sections—“Columns” and “Meta”—tackle entirely different subject matters in this issue. In the case of “Columns”, the topic on the table is Machinima: the emerging, hybridized form of user-generated video game narrative storytelling. Our five fantastic columns tackle Machinima from every angle: school-shootings, suicide bombings, gender/identity, problems with archiving, amateur/professional dialectics, and more!

Finally, our “Meta” section lives up to its name in this issue by providing a space for experimental, critical evaluations of the traditional essay format. As an online journal, [Mediascape’s](#) “Meta” section proudly takes advantage of this new form of publishing with five video works that question the nature of academic expression: must it always be *text*-based, linear, argumentative, etc? In a helpful introductory essay to the section (“A Manifesto for Critical Media”), Eric Faden presents a convincing argument for the adoption of these new forms of critical media as acceptable scholarly practice.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and please feel free to post comments and start dialogues about the issues raised within these digital pages. [Mediascape](#) aspires to be a new type of journal: no less rigorous and scholarly than what the academy is used to but perhaps a bit more accessible, a bit more engaging. In the rapidly-shifting media landscape in which we find ourselves, sticking wholesale to the past is just as counterproductive as rushing headlong into the unforeseen future. Our hope—that is, the hope for [Mediascape](#)—is to thoughtfully survey the interim.

-- Brett McCracken and Jennifer Porst