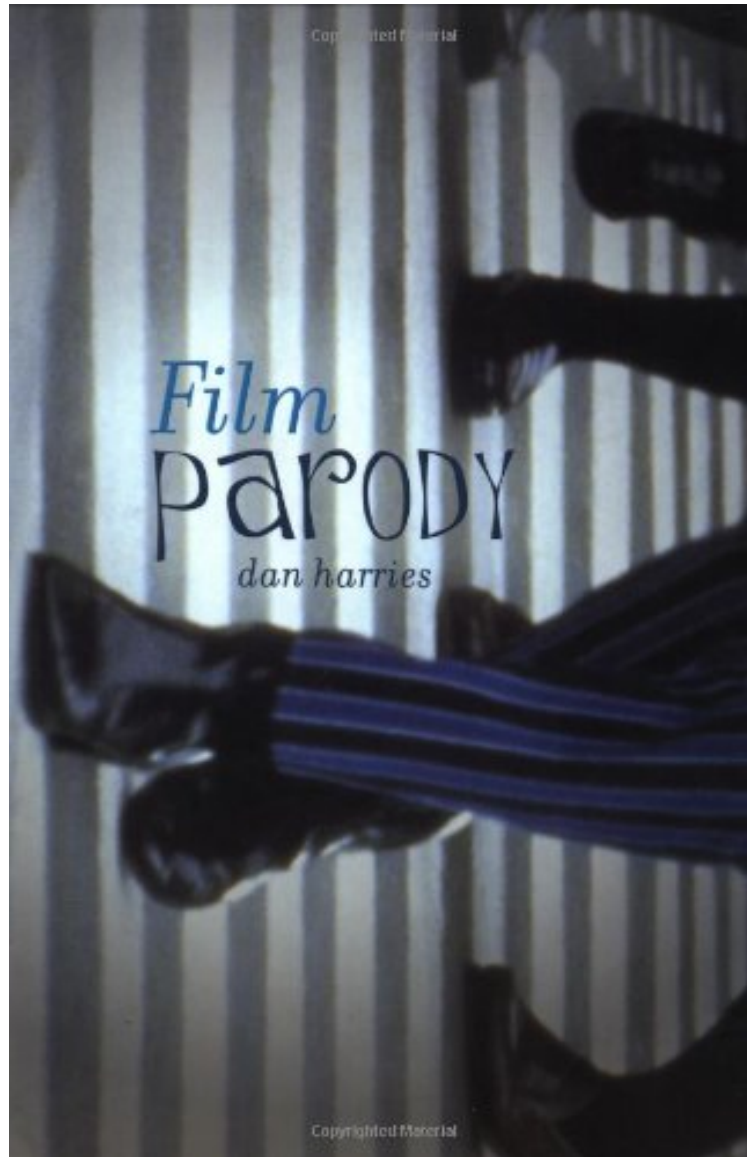


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Film Parody (Distributed for the British Film Institute)

Dan Harries

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Dan Harries : Film Parody (Distributed for the British Film Institute) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Film Parody (Distributed for the British Film Institute):

Film Parody is the first major book on one of the most prolific and profitable - though under-discussed - modes of contemporary filmmaking. This book provides a lucid introduction to the films and a rigorous theoretical account of

how parody itself operates on textual, pragmatic, and socio-cultural levels. Harries provocatively asserts that film parody is now so routinized by the major studios that it must be considered, in its own right, as a major mode of contemporary filmmaking. Tracing a history of parodic cinema from early Laurel and Hardy spoofs to recent box-office hits such as "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery," this book defines parody in relation to other related, though different, modes of discourse such as irony and pastiche. Drawing from this history, and close analyses of films including "Blazing Saddles, Airplane!, Young Frankenstein, Hot Shots!, Naked Gun 33 1/3," and "Zelig, Film Parody" lays out the formal characteristics and examines the various strategies spectators bring to bear when watching parodies.

From the Back Cover Film Parody is the first major book on one of the most prolific and profitable - though under-discussed - modes of contemporary filmmaking. This book provides a lucid introduction to the films and a rigorous theoretical account of how parody itself operates on textual, pragmatic, and socio-cultural levels. Harries provocatively asserts that film parody is now so routinized by the major studios that it must be considered, in its own right, as a major mode of contemporary filmmaking. Tracing a history of parodic cinema from early Laurel and Hardy spoofs to recent box-office hits such as "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery," this book defines parody in relation to other related, though different, modes of discourse such as irony and pastiche. Drawing from this history, and close analyses of films including "Blazing Saddles, Airplane!, Young Frankenstein, Hot Shots!, Naked Gun 33 1/3," and "Zelig, Film Parody" lays out the formal characteristics and examines the various strategies spectators bring to bear when watching parodies. About the Author Dan Harries is Head of the Visual Culture and Media Department, Middlesex University, London and has previously published articles on parody and intertextuality in Quarterly of Film and Video, Film Criticism and Semiotica. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Film parodies have long been popular with film audiences, ranging from Buster Keaton's zany antics in *Sherlock Jr.* (1924) to Warner Bros. classic cartoon parodies such as *Duck Amuck* (1953) to Mel Brooks' string of film spoofs including *Blazing Saddles* (1974) and *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995). And with the tremendous success of such parody films as *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999) bringing in large receipts at the box office (\$205,526,345 total gross over its three month first theatrical run and the 26th top-grossing motion picture in U.S. history), such popularity is certainly still in place. The sparse critical acclaim these films have garnered has been centered not only on their effective dislodging of established film genres, but also on their ability to assault other film canons with humorous effect. While such claims are, to some extent, true, my observations of film parody over the years suggest a process more akin to canonization than any type of radical critique. The central argument of this book hinges upon film parody's increasing transformation into its own canon; looking at how parodic discourse engages in its disrupting activities in a surprisingly standardized and predictable manner. While I would shy away from generating yet another totalizing grand theory of narrative, I am drawn to the notion that certain standardized processes of text and spectatorship are operating in contemporary film parodies, and that such processes are indicative of our ever-increasing levels of cultural irony. One can also draw certain correlations between parody's canonization and the substantial increase in the number of commercial film parodies released since the mid-1970s making it an even more popular and profitable film mode. Not only do films such as *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!* (1988) prove to be big box office draws, they also serve as cogent markers of a culture steeped in an ever-increasing level of irony; an era where postmodern activity has become more the norm than any sort of alternative practice. I characterize this as our culture's state of ironic supersaturation. In fact, with newer generations being fed a daily diet of ironic and parodic discourse in every type of media, one could even posit the threatened relevance of classic canons to people in the not-so-distant future. This book additionally questions the subversive and emancipating properties of parodic film (do we really become liberated after watching an hour and a half of *Spaceballs*?) and concludes that the potential for both transgressive thought and action rests more in our heads than on the flickering image on a screen. Realizing the overlapping distinctions between media in this age of irony and the fact that additional volumes could well be written about parody in television, comic books, radio, or literally any other medium, I focus this particular study on film parody the manner in which it refers to its own film history and how cinematic texts and spectatorship have functioned in creating a parodic canon. The subsequent chapters of this book are concerned with developing a theory of film parody which combines three central dimensions of parodic discourse: the textual, the pragmatic, and the socio-cultural. By combining all three dimensions, we can gain a better understanding of how parodic processes function inter-relatedly with all three dimensions operating simultaneously during any engagement with a parodic film text.