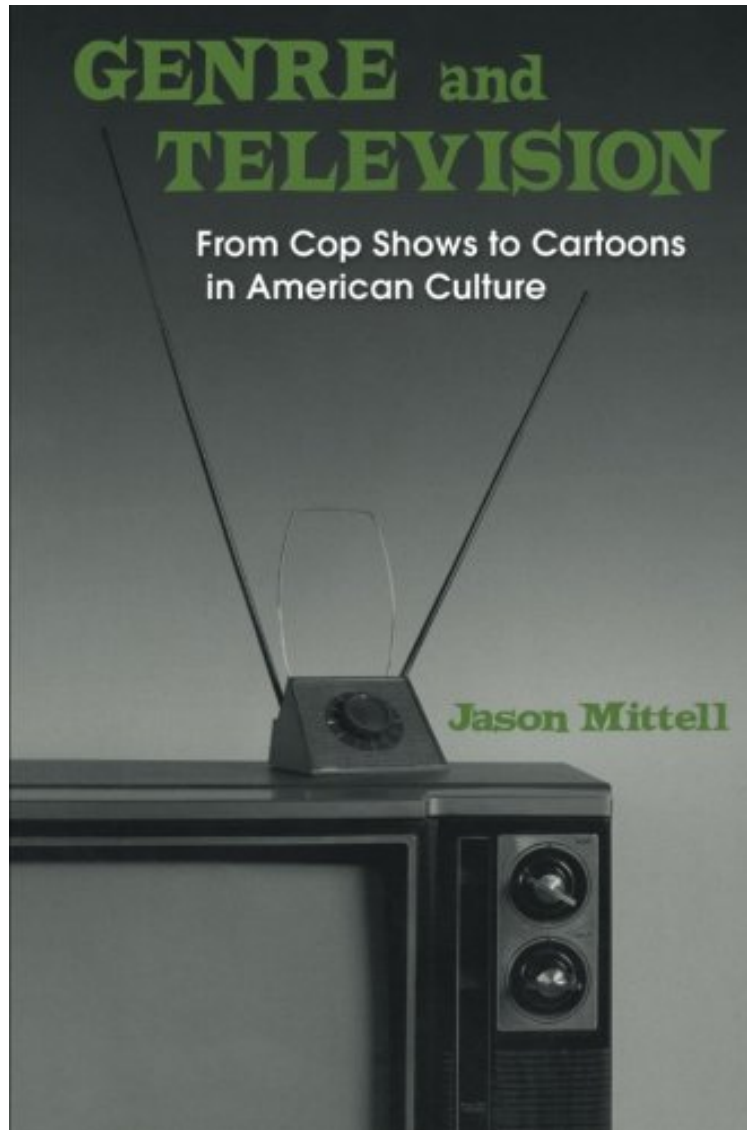


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# Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture

*Jason Mittell*

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#991575 in Books Jason Mittell 2004-06-20 2004-07-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.02 x .59 x 5.981, .93 #File Name: 0415969034256 pagesGenre and Television From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture | File size: 77.Mb

**Jason Mittell : Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. An uniquely intelligent analysis of TV and American cultureBy

Malvin "Genre and Television" by Jason Mittell is a scholarly but accessible study of television and American culture. Mr. Mittell demonstrates how genres function as cultural categories by stressing the interplay of historical processes, industrial practices, audience discourses, text, genre mixing and parody. Interestingly, Mr. Mittell draws on the work of Michel Foucault to discuss how genres are crucial in developing and maintaining audience discourses where definitions, interpretations and evaluations may be challenged and revised over time. Mr. Mittell's mix of interesting and entertaining case studies combined with sophisticated analyses makes for fascinating reading and will no doubt prove to be a highly influential work within the media studies field. Mr. Mittell presents a historiography of the quiz show to demonstrate how public policy decisions can shape genres. The radio origins of the quiz show provided a model of how the genre would be presented on television in the mid-1950s, with expectations of monetary awards, honest competition, a question and answer format, educational content and positive social value. As the reality of lotteries and scripting were discovered, the FCC strong-armed the industry into producing shows that conformed to what it perceived to be the mass audience's preferences and expectations. Cartoons are discussed to illustrate the lasting impact that industrial practices can exert on genres. We learn how cartoons produced by Hollywood film studios for general theater audiences were re-broadcast on television for consumption by children in the Saturday morning timeslot. The short-lived success of Hanna-Barbera's primetime productions such as the 1960s series "The Flintstones" reinforced a growing consensus that cartoons could not be successfully targeted to adults, a view that persisted for decades. However, the author heaps generous praise on Cartoon Network and the cable industry with reinvigorating the genre by successfully cultivating a mass audience of cartoon lovers through the use of shrewd branding characterized by irony, nostalgia and art. The oft-maligned talk show genre was the subject of a survey conducted by the author that attempted to elicit how audience discourses of taste and identity are shaped beyond the viewing experience. Although the survey sample was much too small to be validated scientifically, the answers to the open-ended questions confirmed the author's contention that the "cultural circulation" of genres is important, as viewers and non-viewers frequently reported that they evaluate talk show genres and sub-genres in discussions held with others away from the television set. The importance of reading texts in their historical and social context is illustrated by the 1950s classic "Dragnet", whose suggested authenticity combined with innovative production techniques heavily influenced the police show genre. However, the dualistic worldview of "Dragnet" was disastrously revived in 1967 to changing cultural values that reduced the ideologically-rigid program to self-parody. The author explains how the more successful precedents that were filmed in the 1970s such as "Starsky Hutch" recalled some of the production values of "Dragnet" but increasingly celebrated the "rogue hero" who could navigate the ambiguous moral ground that might exist between the extremes of criminal chaos and a repressive state bureaucracy. Mr. Mittell contends that genre mixing and parody are often employed to heighten cultural assumptions about genre. Parodies such as the 1970s TV series "Soap" successfully mixed daytime dramas with comedy but confounded audience expectations about each of these genres, which explains why the program was so contentious at the time. Likewise, "The Simpsons" blending of cartoon comedy with family sitcom has stirred controversy over the appropriateness of adult-oriented content in a format that has been traditionally associated with young children. I highly recommend this extraordinary book to demanding readers who may be interested in a uniquely intelligent analysis of television and American culture.

Genre and Television proposes a new understanding of television genres as cultural categories, offering a set of in-depth historical and critical examinations to explore five key aspects of television genre: history, industry, audience, text, and genre mixing. Drawing on well-known television programs from Dragnet to The Simpsons, this book provides a new model of genre historiography and illustrates how genres are at work within nearly every facet of television—from policy decisions to production techniques to audience practices. Ultimately, the book argues that through analyzing how television genre operates as a cultural practice, we can better comprehend how television actively shapes our social world.

"Mittell makes a strong case for a return to genre theory, history, and criticism within television studies as a means of understanding the production, distribution, and reception of television programs. Each of the case studies is compelling in its own terms, offering a deep picture of important trends in the history of American television." -- Henry Jenkins, MIT "Genre and Television is an insightful, original, and well researched book and makes a significant and timely contribution to television studies." -- Annette Hill, University of Westminster, UK "Jason Mittell re-energizes the field of genre study with this intriguing analysis of American television. From talk shows to cop shows to reality TV, Mittell eloquently demonstrates why genre still matters to TV creators, critics, and fans. Rigorously researched and theoretically-informed, Genre and Television makes a vital contribution to the field of cultural studies." -- Michael Curtin, University of Wisconsin-Madison "Genres emerge from a dialectic of orthodoxy versus innovation, as the culture industries strive to blend predictability with surprise. By transcending the normal science of textual analysis and considering genres as industrial categories, Jason Mittell has done students of US television a considerable service." -- Toby Miller, Television New Media About the Author Jason Mittell is Assistant Professor of of American Civilization and Film and Media Culture at Middlebury College. He has published essays in Cinema

Journal, *The Velvet Light Trap*, *Television and New Media*, *Film History*, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, and several anthologies. He lives in Middlebury, Vermont.