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## **EDITORIAL**

### **WIDE SCREEN Issue 2, Vol.1 June 2010**

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The boundary between film studies, screen studies and cultural studies is indeed a difficult one to describe, and we learnt that the hard way in this past year. After many arguments, some hard decisions and a few risks, the second general issue of *Wide Screen* is finally here. And it serves as a resounding re-recognition of the scope of film studies. As the truism about film studies goes, there is a text, a rich one, and it is there for us to read, and that's what this discipline is all about – a newer, fancier, literally colourful and sensory version of literature. The weight of that can and has been heatedly debated, but that's hardly the soul essence of film studies anymore. The growing awareness of films not just as texts with beginnings, middles and ends, but as vital industries, as cultural representatives, and markers of our modernity is what this issue of *Wide Screen* stands as testament to.

The most evident distinction that can be seen in this issue, even compared to our own previous issue is the move towards addressing the discipline, engaging with it in ways that go beyond film analysis alone. It is almost redundant to express the centrality of film text in this discipline, but what makes for richer academic work is an engagement with allied impulses and presences – which, in the case of cinema, are nearly boundless. Technology, economy, psychoanalysis, craft, politics, marketing and so much more is crucial to understanding film and its place in our minds, in society and most certainly in academia.

It is impossible and somewhat reductive to claim growth of a discipline or to map its changes without a firm grounding into its literature. Elisa Pezzotta's paper on the distinctions between 'Interpretation', 'Analysis' and 'Close Analysis' brings together the fundamental ideas in film studies with an exhaustive account of the varying strains and debates that theorists have entered into with reference to the most basic terms in film studies. It can well be argued that mapping transitions in fundamental debates plays a central role in bringing vibrancy to the field. Kartik Nair's work on auteur theory, by invoking Walter Benjamin's celebrated work on Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, examines Martin Scorsese's tribute to Alfred Hitchcock by means of the short film *A Key to Reserva*. The journey of the American auteur from Hitchcock to Scorsese becomes the stage for a wider exploration on mass production, authorship and of course aura. Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates's piece also works on the idea of reception, but they do so by extending reception beyond fandom. Engaging with changing technologies, they focus on the phenomenon of collecting DVDs, which, they argue, is not just about being a fan or a victim of consumer culture, but rather a marker of a new creative space that can forge very specific relationships.

In our inaugural issue, we addressed the question of why another film journal to add to a 150-strong list. We feel that with this issue, we give more reasons still as to why we took on this project. No discipline can develop on the might of the mighty alone, it needs to give birth to new ideas all the time, and for that, scholars who engage with cinema through different media, different apparatuses—and as a result have access to a variety of cinema—becomes crucial. We've made it a point to include new approaches and different methodologies in disseminating research. So, on the one hand we have Sarah Niazi who navigates the cinema of Jafar Panahi by reading his films as urban phenomenon that develop an aesthetic of veiling, and on the other, we have Gerry Coulter who presents a perspective on Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others* by examining its aesthetic devices and in the process attempting to search for answers to what a film like this, which is grounded in the past, can mean to youngsters who have no way of connecting with history but through representation. Disengagement with history,

and a general sense of apathy that is ascribed to the modern youth is the subject of Kshama Kumar's paper on Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Rang De Basanti*. She explores the film as a response to the postcolonial situation where, through a self-conscious reversal of the idea of mimesis with the help of the cinematic apparatus, there is a negotiation of the past and the present. On the other end of the spectrum and yet in some way similar is Natasha Mansfield's work that deals with the narration and reception of trauma in the animated film *Waltz with Bashir*, directed by Ari Folman, using the tools of psychoanalysis, exploring the impact of animation to tell a story of annihilation. Does it offer anonymity, distance and objectivity, or does the conscious aestheticization achieve something much more tactile?

A desire for distance and objectivity is much more than a mere penchant now, simply because in a world of hyperstimuli and easy access to filmmaking apparatus, the need for newer perspectives is most urgent. It is a power really, the ability to present our side of the story; it is no longer a debate buried in cumbersome books on subaltern histories, our stories can now arguably compete with the wildest, most extravagant of fictions that big banner production houses make in dozens every year. Needless to say, this new power, the easy access has had such an impact not just on film but also on film studies. A case in point is Zelig Asava's paper on multiculturalism and morphing in Todd Haynes's *I'm Not There*. When the film released in 2008, reviewers and audiences alike claimed that they had never seen a biopic quite like that, and while Bob Dylan has indeed been a figure out of anybody's reach, a film that took his multiplicity so literally, was something no one could have anticipated. Asava's contention is not this unique structure but rather a detail – she emphasizes Haynes' characterization of Woody, the African American boy who is said to represent the influence of Blues on Dylan's music. Extending the argument to the race politics promoted by Michael Jackson (in particular in the video of the song 'Black or White'), Asava's comment is not on race, but instead the new, uncertain identity that is characteristic of the globalised world.

The linkages between the contributions we got are by no means immanent or intended, but as we discovered, upon closer examination, there is a binding factor, not just for the

researchers who have contributed to this issue of *Wide Screen*, but also for us who constantly have to remind ourselves of why we are in this business. At the cost of sounding utterly repetitive, I will say that the bind is the attempt to look for something new – to discover, to rediscover, to define, to re-gather and ultimately to create an archive that is bursting at the seams with possibilities.

We take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been a part of *Wide Screen* - all those on the peer review committees, members of the editorial and advisory boards and all our friends and families who have been more helpful and understanding in these few months than we could have imagined. No issue of *Wide Screen* is possible without any of their support.

Until next issue then.

Happy reading.