

Jump Cut

Looking at media in its social and political context

JUMP CUT : A review of Contemporary Media is run on a nonprofit basis by its staff and is not affiliated with or supported by any institution. Begun in 1974 as a film publication, JUMP CUT now publishes material on film, television, video and related media and cultural analysis. As a print publication till 2001, JUMP CUT circulated 4000 copies per issue in North America and internationally to a wide range of readers including students, academics, media professionals, political activists, radicals interested in culture, film and video makers, and others interested in the radical analysis of mass culture and opposition media.

General Editorial Policies

Taking an explicit political stand as a nonsectarian left, feminist, and anti-imperialist publication, JUMP CUT is committed to presenting and developing media criticism which recognizes: (1) media in a social and political context; (2) the political and social needs and perspectives of people struggling for liberation--workers, women, Blacks and other oppressed minorities, Third World people, gays and lesbians; (3) the interrelationship of class, race, and gender oppression; (4) new theoretical and analytic perspectives.

We stress contemporary media but we are open to publishing material on older films, tapes, and programs when the article involves a significant reevaluation or uses a well-known example to develop a critical or theoretical point. Our range is all types and forms of media from Hollywood's commercial dramatic narrative to independent documentary and experimental work. We are especially interested in neglected areas such as educational media, children's programs, animation, intermediate and mixed media, new technologies, consumer formats, etc., and related areas of radical cultural analysis such as photography and popular music.

Areas of Special Interest

Every issue of JUMP CUT has several standard features such as review essays, reports, editorials and so forth. In addition, most issues have one or more "special sections" which are thematically arranged and which run sequentially over several issues. Upcoming and ongoing special sections are listed in each issue.

1) Review essays

We place a premium on review essays covering works in current distribution, from the U.S. or abroad. Typically every issue covers several Hollywood features and broadcast TV programs. Such pieces go in the front of JUMP CUT and have the widest appeal to our readership. We see them as opportunities to develop a political and aesthetic analysis of the dominant cinema/TV in terms of current work which many people have seen. We encourage a variety of styles and approaches and will run more than one piece on the same work if the analyses warrant it. In other words, we don't assign exclusive reviews or preclude further articles because we've accepted one on a particular film, show, or tape.

Our primary concern with review essays is that they provide thoughtful and provocative analysis. Because JUMP CUT is not a frequent publication, the typical journalistic consumer guide review has little appeal for us. We are not interested in reviews which are essentially no more than strong opinions forcefully expressed. We expect an analysis which discusses both the ideological nature of the work at hand and its artistic expression. Because even a fairly popular work may not have been seen by our many international readers, writers should not assume that everyone has seen the film/tape and should include enough detail to substantiate the analysis.

We are particularly wary of reviews of popular films and television which show the "bad" ideological message of a work and offer no explanation of why the work is appealing and successful with the mass audience--particularly when it seems the critic is putting him/herself above and apart from the general audience. In all cases we expect the writer to make clear the underlying political and aesthetic assumptions of her/his argument.

2) Independent Film/Video: Narrative, Documentary, Experimental

We are interested in reviews of new work, but also discussions of financing, production, distribution and exhibition of independent work. Discussions of feminist, Black, Latino, Asian, and gay work are especially welcome. We sometimes publish interviews with makers, but usually only along with an analytic article discussing the work. Writers should be aware that many of our readers may not have seen the film or tape being discussed, and thus should introduce and provide a context for the analysis. For example, issue-oriented documentaries often need an explanation of the issues and the history of organizing around the concerns. Reviews of such works often benefit from the reviewer showing them to different groups and seeing the responses. Similarly, because many of our readers are unfamiliar with contemporary avant garde media, giving an aesthetic, historical, and/or institutional context for such work is often helpful.

3) Third World Film and Video

Reviews of specific works or groups of work, and reports on national cinemas and televisions is always of interest to us. We are interested in the use and development of new technologies and consumer formats, such as videocassette distribution. While our primary concern is with films and tapes in liberation struggles, particularly in the current hot spots of US imperialism--Central America, the Philippines, South Africa, the Middle East--we are also concerned with the entire range of national production from the commercial and entertainment media to the state sponsored and subsidized and independent sectors. The development of media after socialist revolutions, from the Bolsheviks to the present, is also an ongoing concern, as is media production in the former socialist states.

4) New Media Theory

We have a long standing interest in developing a more rigorous and sophisticated left media theory. We are concerned with theoretical work which shows an awareness of socialist, feminist, gay, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist concerns as well as post-structuralist approaches. Because we find much recent theoretical writing academic and elitist in the worst sense, we encourage work that can bridge the gap between pioneering new insights and addressing our broad readership. Case studies that can demonstrate new methodologies in accessible language reach many of our readers. We are also especially interested in introducing major thinkers and trends in left cultural analysis with extended reviews of various works, survey articles, etc. New radical work being done in other disciplines and specialties such as art history and criticism, cultural anthropology, sociology, area studies, etc. interest us.

5) Resources

We regularly publish special bibliographies, filmographies, documents, data, etc. pertaining to our editorial goals.

6) Reportage

We cover significant radical culture, art, and media conferences, organizing efforts, retrospectives, etc. We do not run reports on routine festivals; don't bother to ask us for a letter to get a press pass.

7) Critical Dialogue

A regular feature, this is a forum for substantive discussion of topics raised in previous issues.

8) Media Salad

We try to give short descriptive and evaluative notices for films, tapes, books, magazines, festival and exhibition catalogues, and other materials which are especially pertinent to our declared range of interests. Usually these are written by members of the editorial board. We welcome having new items brought to our attention.

9) Books

We do not make an effort to cover all the significant media books since other publications cover the territory. We are especially interested in reviews of individual books or groups of books which can be occasions for critically discussing a particular topic: for example, a review of several books on film melodrama and soap opera could discuss the development of genre analysis and feminist theory. Query the editors if you are interested in doing a book review.

10) Media use and pedagogy

Reports and reflections on media in and out of the classroom; media in consciousness raising and organizing.

11) Visual material

Photo essays, computer graphics, cartoons, etc. are always welcome. Submit xeroxes, not originals. We cannot pay visual artists (or writers), but we will try to meet unusual expenses if the work is accepted.

Audience and politics

JUMP CUT's readership is very diverse, and we want what we publish to be accessible to the largest number of our readers. You should assume that the reader has an interest in your subject, a basic vocabulary of media terms (for example, knows what a jump cut is), but no specialized knowledge. This is not to say you can't be theoretical and intricate, but it is to say you shouldn't be esoteric or pedantic.

If it's worth saying, it can be made reasonably understandable.

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Pioneers since 1974, analyzing media in relation to class, race, and gender

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