

moral, family-focused, citizen ideals . . . were contrasted with images of urban-affiliated youth and Left political activist movements that suggested a 'rejection of American values' and of 'straight American society'" (79). Expanding on this theme, a fascinating overview of MTM Productions' "quality comedies" of the 1970s offers richly detailed analyses of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Bob Newhart Show*, and *WKRP in Cincinnati*, contending that while these shows presented a "newly urbane imagination of the Midwest" (113) they also deflected larger issues of dissent and unrest prevalent in the Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras, representing the Heartland as a place "untouched by political turmoil . . . which survived the sixties unfazed, unaltered and in balance" (117). Among other topics, remaining chapters explore the controversial portrayals of lesbianism in *Rosanne* and *Ellen*, as well as how news coverage and commemoration of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing drew insistently on the Heartland narrative.

There are a few problematic areas. Although the book is for the most part engagingly written, it is occasionally burdened with dense and repetitive academic jargon, revealing its origins as a dissertation. Also, while likely the decision of the publisher and not the author, the absence of a bibliography is inappropriate for a major work of scholarship. These concerns do not detract from Johnson's overall accomplishment, however. Her work is thoroughly researched, conceptually sophisticated, and offers a fresh rethinking of the history and cultural politics of television. A fine example of the exciting new scholarship emerging in television studies, *Heartland TV* is a ground-breaking study and likely to become a future classic.

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Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun. Paul S. Moore. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

In *Now Playing*, Paul S. Moore provides a social history of the movie theater from its origins in the nickelodeon theatres of 1896 to the theatres in 1906 through World War I. Focusing his case study on

Toronto, Canada, Moore argues that local showmen, municipal and state legislators, reformers, journalists, and audiences molded and shaped the atmosphere surrounding film viewing to fit local interests and needs. Moore contends that these local individuals helped moviegoing develop into a mass cultural practice.

Moore, who teaches sociology at Ryerson University, arranges his study chronologically, pointing out that distinct local characteristics accompanied the growth of moviegoing despite the film industry's transnational origins. Early theatres featured different architectures and prices because each sought to cater to distinct economic and ethnic audiences. Cheap novelty nickel shows with intricately designed architecture, for example, catered to local working-class and immigrant communities in Toronto. Moore explains that the first regulations related to film were also distinctly local in nature. Theatres everywhere had a reputation for "social combustibility," as Moore describes, not only because of the tendency of film materials to catch fire, but also because of the audience's tendency to panic during such incidents, which often lead to injury and death among audience members. Each community decided how to deal with this social combustibility in its own way. With no national oversight or regulation, local police worked together with showmen and local government officials to develop their own local fire safety codes to prevent disasters.

In his final chapters, Moore tells how the distinctly local cultural pastime of moviegoing became part of mass culture. As corporate ownership replaced local ownership, theatres became standardized. Simultaneously, advertisements in newspapers shifted their focus from the aesthetics of local venues to the content of the films themselves. Finally, national bureaucratic oversight of both fire laws and moral standards replaced local regulation. Moore asserts that these shifts transformed moviegoing from a local practice into a transnational, mass practice. Yet Moore is careful to remind readers that moviegoing remained a mass cultural practice with local roots. During World War I, for example, Canadians patronizing theatres helped subsidize the War Relief Fund with their ticket sales. Through this process, moviegoing became a distinctly Canadian patriotic act despite the fact that Canadians watched US-made films in these theatres.

Moore pays special attention to details, such as how showmen advertised their theatres, the type of person who attended the films, and the aesthetic qualities of the theatre houses themselves. His

awareness of the historiography of film and numerous works of social theory is also commendable. At times, however, the interspersed references to secondary works seem to distract from the study's central contentions. Perhaps more disappointing is the lack of citation for the archival work that his text suggests. Often one is left wondering where Moore gained important information such as the exact number of theatres in Toronto at a given time or even where he found copies of the numerous newspaper articles that he relies on for the majority of his documentation. An acknowledgement of the archival origins of his findings would add to this study's merit.

Despite minor shortcomings, Moore's study deserves much credit for challenging readers to rethink common understandings about mass culture and Americanization, and provides a refreshing departure from traditional studies of film history. He successfully shows that local civic cultures are instrumental in anchoring the spread of mass culture. Moreover, he clearly demonstrates that the very act of going to a movie can have local cultural meaning—at times even more meaning—than that present in the film itself.

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Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Censorship, 1915–1981. Laura Wittern-Keller. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008.

Despite the considerable historical attention given to film censorship, the last comprehensive studies of American state censorship appeared four decades ago—before the era of state censorship had even ended. In *Freedom of the Screen*, Laura Wittern-Keller provides a valuable new study of the topic, one that deserves to be, and surely will become, the standard reference.

Tracking state-level censorship from the early years of cinema through its protracted demise, Wittern-Keller makes the fresh and convincing case that the key agitators for “freedom of the screen” were not the judiciary (which showed little interest in First Amendment rights, particularly for films, until after World War II), not the Hollywood studios (always more interested in profits than artistic