

- EDITORIAL -

## **Sea Change: Transforming Industries, Screens, Texts**

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This special issue of *MEDIANZ: Media Studies Journal of Aotearoa New Zealand* is devoted to themes arising from the inaugural Screen Studies Association of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (SSAAANZ) Conference, *Sea Change: Transforming Industries, Screens, Texts*, which took place in Wellington in November 2016. The conference provided scholars working across Film, Media and Television Studies with the opportunity to share innovative research about change and transformation in these fields. The papers presented at the conference dealt with a wide range of topics including screen theory and history, film and television genres, aesthetics, audiences, media technology and the representation of landscape, gender and race. While a number of papers focused on European and American film and television, the conference's call for papers particularly encouraged engagement with the screen industries, technologies and texts of Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region. The conference sparked a series of lively debates and led to a number of publication outcomes and initiatives, which include this MEDIANZ special issue.<sup>1</sup>

The orientation of this special issue mirrors that of the conference, with a particular focus on the analysis of the changing New Zealand mediascape. Recent significant economic, technological and social developments mean that established ideas about identity, place and nation in Aotearoa New Zealand are changing very rapidly. Aotearoa New Zealand is simultaneously connected to and separated from the rest of the world by the Pacific Ocean. The conference title points to the fluid nature of the ocean, which in turn provides an apt metaphor to illustrate the significant changes occurring in the

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contemporary New Zealand mediascape. These transformations are evident in the continuing relationships between New Zealand and European, Australian and American media industries, but also in the emerging connections and cultural exchanges with Asia and the Pacific. This special issue explores some of the economic, industrial, aesthetic and technological transformations which characterise the contemporary New Zealand screen industry. It also proposes novel theoretical approaches and interpretations of local media history, texts, genres and aesthetics.

The first two contributions by Rachael Anderson and Susan Nemeč examine the role of television in shaping a sense of national identity in Aotearoa New Zealand. The starting point of Rachael Anderson's article is the contemporary renegotiation of airports as cultural and geopolitical spaces. Anderson analyses the representation of New Zealand international airports, as gateways to the nation, to shed new light on the ways in which movement across the border is conceived and regulated. More specifically, she assesses the role played by TV shows such as *Border Patrol* to forge certain ideas of citizenship and 'New Zealandness'. Nemeč's article investigates the role of Māori Television in facilitating migrants' engagement with te reo language acquisition. Nemeč suggests that often migrants arriving to Aotearoa are ready to acquire some knowledge of te reo because of their own multilingual background. Nemeč explores the different ways in which Māori Television provides migrants with cultural resources to increase their te reo skills and vocabulary. She concludes that, in turn, migrants have the potential to make a significant contribution to the revitalisation of Māori language.

Alan Wright's and Rosina Hickman's contributions further problematise the notions of cultural authenticity and national identity by proposing new historiographical approaches to New Zealand national cinema. Wright's article unsettles established conceptions of cultural nationalism by arguing that the *unheimlich's* quality of a certain New Zealand cinema makes local film foreign to itself. In particular, he takes 'dubbing' as a metaphor to propose a new reading of the history of New Zealand film that subverts the binary opposition between local and global. Hickman's contribution examines the representation of rural New Zealand while offering new analytical tools to understand an often-overlooked mode of filmmaking such as the amateur movie. Hickman investigates the way in which early amateur films were able to provide an alternative representation of New Zealand rural life and iconography. She suggests, however, that while early New Zealand amateur films were less concerned with scenery than the depiction of rural work, they shared some of the discourses perpetuated by coeval professional media, in particular the celebration of western modernity and its ability to transform the land.

The last two articles by Christina Milligan and Thierry Jutel, respectively, shift the focus to the way in which creative processes are articulated and communicated by New Zealand media practitioners. Milligan examines Barry Barclay's approach to creativity and innovation in the broader context of indigenous media practices. More specifically, she shares her perspective as a producer working with Barclay late in his career, and

discusses the ways in which, within this collaborative experience, creative disagreements were always focused on enhancing the work itself. In the final piece of this special issue, Jutel analyses *King Kong: Peter Jackson's Production Diaries* (2005) as an example of both 'paratext', a text which enriches the experience of the media text it supports (Gray, 2010), and 'reflexive industrial discourses' (Caldwell, 2008). The analysis of the *Production Diaries* allows Jutel to identify the discursive frameworks that Peter Jackson deploys to explain, document and justify production decisions. In doing so Jutel also proposes a new approach to the study of a type of media form, the so called 'behind-the-scenes' video, which has too often been neglected by film scholars. This special issue draws together a diverse range of approaches to the study of New Zealand media. By deploying a variety of theoretical and methodological frameworks as well as focusing on the analysis of different media and case studies, the contributions featured in this special issue help us to better understand the 'sea change' of the contemporary New Zealand mediascape.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing there are also plans for a special issue of *Studies in Australasian Cinema* and a special section of *Screening the Past* devoted to the publication of some of the papers presented at the SSAAANZ conference.

### **References**

- Caldwell, John. 2008. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gray, Jonathan. 2010. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York: New York University Press.