Fandom | Cultures | Research
ONLINE JOURNAL FOR FAN AND AUDIENCE STUDIES

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Tamar Jeffers McDonald, Lies Lanckman, Sarah Polley (eds.): Stars, Fan Magazines and Audiences: Desire by Design

KEYWORDS

fan magazines, film magazines, film culture, Hollywood, stardom, cinephilia

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Cite as: Ossa, Vanessa: Book Review: Tamar Jeffers McDonald, Lies Lanckman, Sarah Polley (eds.): Stars, Fan Magazines and Audiences: Desire by Design. In: *Fandom | Cultures | Research* 2 (1), 2025, pp.88-90. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/23961

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Tamar Jeffers McDonald, Lies Lanckman, Sarah Polley (eds.): Stars, Fan Magazines and Audiences: Desire by Design Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP 2023, 296 pp., ISBN 9781399505925, GBP 95,-

The collaborative volume *Stars, Fan Magazines and Audiences*, edited by Tamar Jeffers McDonald, Lies Lanckman, and Sarah Polley, explores the multifaceted relationship between early (Hollywood) stars and their fans through the lens of fan magazines. Special consideration is given to the many ways in which the authors and editors of those magazines shaped this relationship through textual, visual, and editorial design choices.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first is dedicated to close readings of single magazine issues and the second broadens its scope to fan magazines and their regular content in general. With one exception from France, both parts focus on British and US publications. The third part, "Fan Magazines and Related Publications," however, casts a far wider net by including chapters that shift the focus away from fan magazines. Despite the initial impression that the publication loses its focus in these later chapters, this section in particular features a number of extraordinary contributions.

The volume opens with an introduction, followed immediately by another introduction to the first part. Each part opens with its own separate introduction. This makes it easily accessible for stand-alone reading but it feels somewhat redundant if you read the entire book.

The first part includes four chapters by Joel Casey, Carolyn Owen King, Lisa Hood, and Cathy Lomax. They each focus on a single issue of a British or US American fan magazine. Casey's "Never the Twain Shall Meet: Touch, Double-Sidedness, and Race in the Pages of *Picture Show*" begins with an analysis of an issue from 1921, focusing on magazines as material objects with pages that must be touched, turned, and closed. It explores how subtle commentaries about relationships between stars can be found in their positions "between the pages" (p.20), especially if the relationship in question involves an interracial pair, as in the analyzed example of *Broken Blossoms* (1919). "The Paradoxical Glamour of the Phoney War: Examining the Design of *Picturegoer*" by Owen King is the second contribution in this section to discuss a British magazine—in this case, *Picturegoer*—but it jumps twenty years ahead to examine an issue from 1940. King questions who the magazine addresses as its readers. Although the target audience of fan magazines is generally identified as female, she shows how women are subtly belittled, chastised, and objectified—especially if we take the relations between text and images into account. In her example, men are shown as authority figures while women are reduced to their appearance; women are educated in many different ways on how they could improve their exterior to suit and pleasure a male gaze. With "Mid-Century Masculinities: Presentation as Subtext in *Photoplay*," Hood follows a similar approach. The close reading of a 1955 issue of the primarily US American fan magazine *Photoplay* artfully reveals hidden commentaries on the depicted male Hollywood stars, including Victor Mature, Marlon Brando, Edmund Purdom, and Rock Hudson. Again, editorial choices and visual design—including the selection and placement of pictures and advertisements, as well as the typography of headlines—play a

crucial role in the analysis. The last chapter in the first section also focuses on Photoplay from 1955. In "Dorothy Dandridge, the Invisible Star: Racial Segregation in Hollywood Fan Magazines in the 1950s," Lomax undertakes the complex endeavor to demonstrate that, although Dorothy Dandridge is featured in the magazine, the black actress appears still less often than the majority of white Hollywood stars. The placement of the articles about Dandridge and the content next to them supports the argument that she is singled out unfavorably. To support this further, Lomax includes Dandridge's representation in *Ebony*, a magazine that was specifically designed for African American readers, and European fan magazines in her comparative analysis. All four chapters offer essential insights into the hidden codes of magazine design, which become visible only when we learn more about the historical circumstances surrounding the stars depicted. Especially the placement in the overall structure of the magazine, the design of the reading flow, and the interplay with advertisements are meaningful choices in all four examples.

The second part also consists of four chapters, written by Gillian Kelly, Sarah Polley, Dominic Topp, and Tamar Jeffers McDonald. All four focus on the regular content of fan magazines, such as covers, advertisements, editorial content, drawn novels, and contests. The first chapter by Kelly, "Tyrone Power: International 'Cover Boy'," follows the career of Tyrone Power through his depictions on several cover pages from his first cover in 1937 to his sudden death in 1958. In "Leafing Men and Ladies: Fan Magazines and Reading Strategies," Polley examines how pictures, articles about stars, regular editorial content, and advertisements interact with one another. The chapter includes five graphs of the content structure from *Picture Show*, *Picturegoer*, *Filmalaya*, *Photoplay UK*, and *Photoplay US* from 1955. The only contribution in the first two parts dedicated to a magazine outside of the UK or US, is "A Star is Drawn: Media Hybridity and Ordinary Cinephilia in *La Passion de Dora*" by Topp. The author looks at the French magazine *Ciné-Miroir* from 1948. This magazine featured a picture novel about the fictional movie star 'Dora' in 15 of its issues. Topp shows how the comic encourages cinephile attitudes by ironically reflecting on the world of film stars and the role of film magazines in it. In "Wielding the Scissors: Industry Politics and Play in Movie Magazines, 1933–1934," McDonald demonstrates how the invitation to cut out pieces of the magazine *Modern Screen* for a contest can be interpreted as a subtle commentary on censorship in Hollywood. The four chapters in this section offer a knowledgeable insight into standard publishing practices for fan magazines between the 1930s and the 1950s.

As previously mentioned, the final section significantly expands the scope of the edited volume. Several chapters demonstrate how we can gain insight into film and cinema history by working with film magazines, rather than placing them at the center of the investigation. The first chapter in this section, "Universal Horror and *Universal Weekly*: The Visible Invisibility of the *Invisible Man*," is a good example of this. Here, Rahul Kumar describes the inventive PR strategy for a movie with an invisible protagonist by focusing on the film's depiction in Universal's *Universal Weekly*. In the next chapter, "A Performance Studies Perspective on Fan Magazine Images and Silent Film Acting," Jennifer Voss explores how depictions of stars and their facial expressions may have contributed to the conventionalization of certain acting styles in early Hollywood. The chapter "Context, Content and Form in 1940s British Film Star Fan Club Publications," written by Ellen Wright and Phyll Smith, stands out by providing a compelling historical account of the sudden popularity of fan club publications during the Second World War in Britain—a time when paper was scarce and fan magazines had to reduce their pages. In addition to the historical research, this chapter also offers an insightful discussion of Edgar Morin's 'desire/devotion' model and its applicability in understanding both fans and stars. The last two chapters discuss non-

English fan magazines: In "The Missing Piece: Imaginary Audiences in the *Ecran* Fan Magazine of the 1940s," María Paz Peirano and Claudia Bossay demonstrate how the Chilean film magazine *Ecran* can be utilized to gain historical insights into film audiences; Lies Lanckman unravels the complex relationship between Hollywood stars and the local readership of *Film-Nayes* in "The Silver Screen and the Golden Land: Hollywood and 'Hereness' in the Pages of *Film-Nayes* (1936–1938)." Lanckman discusses how the Polish-Jewish publication, published in Hebrew, navigates content between European and Hollywood cinema, as well as a readership that bridges Polish and Jewish culture, during a time of Fascism in Europe and the growth of Jewish culture in exile in Hollywood. This last section includes some unusual examples that differ from the more thoroughly researched Hollywood fan magazines and thus constitute crucial additions to scholarship on historical fandoms and fan magazines.

Overall, most of the chapters focus on close readings of the historical material rather than theoretical contextualization. The strength of the volume lies unquestionably in the insightful interpretations that thoughtfully consider historical context and publishing practices at the time. It is tailored to scholars in media, film, and historical studies who are already familiar with the historical circumstances of early cinema fandom and wish to move beyond broad contextual frameworks to engage with precise examples and case studies.