Conforming passions: contemporary romantic comedy


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Abstract

"Genre and Contemporary Hollywood", edited by Steve Neale, presents a wide-ranging collection of new critical assessments of the shifting role of genre within Hollywood production of the last 20 years. With chapters from such eminent scholars as Tino Balio, J.P. Telotte, Andrew Tudor, William Paul, Karen Hollinger, Roberta Pearson, Peter Kramer and S. Craig Watkins, the book offers fresh perspectives on a range of generic forms, including animated feature films, action-adventure blockbusters, Shakespeare adaptations, war films, neo-noirs, teenpics, westerns, musicals, horror films, ghetto action films, parody and other forms of comedy. Krutnik's chapter provides a new contribution to his much-cited work on romantic comedy that was inaugurated with the acclaimed 1990 book "Popular Film and Television Comedy", co-written with Steve Neale. The starting point for the chapter is an original survey of films that have been designated as romantic comedies in a range of sources (newspaper reviews, the trade press, internet sites, etc) from the 1980s to the early 2000s, which is used to explore the range of trends, forms and tendencies encompassed by romantic comedy as a discursive category. Besides charting this proliferation of romantic comedies, the chapter also provides a fresh and insightful analysis of the distinctive operating procedures of how romantic comedy operates within contemporary cinema. In particular, it examines how these films seek to reconcile traditional ideas and ideals of romantic love with the much transformed contexts and expectations of contemporary life and society, contemporary gender politics and contemporary sexual culture. Providing close textual analysis of selected films, the chapter suggests that the contemporary romantic comedies display a distinctively self-conscious deployment of generic and romantic conventions while at the same time revealing a passionate conformism to traditional protocols of sexuality and gender.

Item Type: Book Section

This chapter adds to Krutnik's much-cited body of work on romantic comedy, inaugurated with his 1990 book Popular Film and Television Comedy, co-written with Steve Neale. The chapter contributes to scholarship by producing an original typology of films that have been designated as romantic comedies, in a range of sources (newspaper reviews, the trade press, internet sites, etc) from the 1980s to the early 2000s. This is then used to explore the range of trends, forms and tendencies encompassed by romantic comedy as a discursive category.

Additional Information:

Schools and Departments:

Oxford Brookes University > Film and Theatre Studies

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Studies of Individual Contemporary Romantic Comedy Films. Autobiographies of, Interviews with, and Statements by Filmmakers. Allen, Woody (1935–). Romantic comedies are often dismissed as formulaic stories promoting fantasies about love. But these comedies have a pedigree that includes William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Oscar Wilde. Moreover, these films reward study because they deal with dramatic conflicts central to human experience. From those conflicts arise the familiar conventions that form the foundation for the romantic comedy and portray our social manners surrounding courtship, sexuality, and gender relations. Contemporary romance themes include, but aren't limited to, romantic comedy, contemporary cowboys, military romance (these may also fit under romantic suspense), big city/bright lights, multicultural, rock stars, billionaires, and more. Submissions of contemporary erotic romance should be submitted via the erotic romance category. Submissions of LGBT romance (and non-romance) should be submitted via the LGBT category.

4 Romantic Comedies for Feminists. By Anais Rivero. Posted on October 3, 2017. Credit: ew.com. Share Tweet. Sorry guys, but the secret’s out: the romantic comedy genre is incredibly sexist and problematic. If women are not expected to “improve themselves” to get a man (see She’s All That), either their entire arcs surround their relationships with men or they are two-dimensional manic-pixie dream girls. This genre has women as the co-lead yet usually doesn’t know what to do with them. Jessica’s love interest Boone never tries to dominate her or conform to toxic masculinity roles but instead admires her independence and encourages her career endeavors. Not only that, but the move is sex-positive, celebrating not only Jessica’s sexuality but her best friend’s.