

Teresa Forde**J.P. Telotte:
Science Fiction TV.
London: Routledge. 2014**MedieKultur 2016, 59, 179-181

Published by SMID | Society of Media researchers In Denmark | www.smid.dkThe online version of this text can be found open access at www.mediekultur.dk

J.P. Telotte's guide entitled *Science Fiction TV* is part of a series of Routledge Television Guidebooks. It is aimed at both undergraduate students studying science fiction on television and a wider audience who are interested in the genre. Telotte illustrates the ways in which SFTV can be understood in terms of narrative, format, fans and industry. The guide includes an exploration of the genre through both historical and contemporary examples. Telotte has chosen to focus on case studies of SFTV throughout the book and uses each television programme to illustrate the theme of a particular chapter. There are questions relating to each chapter at the back of the book encouraging the reader to consider specific programmes in the context of wider issues related to SFTV. There are many other introductions exploring American and British science fiction that concentrate on ideological and cultural readings of science fiction. This guide presents an introduction to the genre across a range of categories using recognised narrative models and acknowledging industry formats. This approach raises questions about transmediality, adaptation and influence requiring further investigation.

Telotte has focused primarily upon American science fiction television and its influences. It would be more useful to embrace this focus on American examples in order to identify the ways in which the national context of American broadcasting has traditionally produced particular textual forms and influences and the ways in which this has developed within a global context. Telotte identifies early television examples, such as *Captain Video*, that appear to be relatively parochial and specific to American audiences. However, *Cap-*

tain Video is a useful example as an influence upon SFTV in relation to American broadcasting, mirroring some of the transitions from radio serial format that are recognizable in early television. Instead of referring to SFTV per se it might be more appropriate to refer to Telotte's focus on 'USSFTV', as American examples form the primary focus of the book.

The decision to divide the book into five main sections is designed to account for the influences of SFTV beginning with a brief history of (early) SFTV, industrial and narrative models, Cultural issues and SFTV, SFTV audiences and, finally, SFTV as a hybrid mode. Within the chapter on industry and narrative it is argued that examples of American science fiction television such as the *Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* illustrate the two influential formats of the anthology show and the long form series respectively. Even at an introductory level, investigating the synergies between different aspects of genre, such as fan identification and the long form series, may have proven beneficial to illustrate the ways in which genre functions between text, industry and audience.

Telotte discusses a number of examples with a sense of familiarity and the development of the genre within a specific broadcasting framework. Telotte describes how new arrivals into the Doctor's TARDIS often describe surprise that the TARDIS is 'larger on the inside than out' (p.27). The phrase 'bigger on the inside', is the now more renowned response from characters as they enter the TARDIS, particularly within *New Who*. This reference to *Doctor Who* may be symptomatic of a larger, or should I say bigger, issue regarding reader expectation. Presumably to attract readers who are interested in *Doctor Who*, the cover depicts the Eleventh Doctor and Amy Pond in the TARDIS. But the book's content does not adequately reflect the expected focus on *Doctor Who* inside. It would be more appropriate to have provided a front cover depicting *Star Trek*, *Firefly* or even possibly *Captain Video*.

The guide utilises narrative construction and formats as a way of understanding aspects cultural meaning, characterisation and genre hybridity. Regarding 'SFTV in a Hybrid Mode'. Telotte recognises the ways in which the weekly police procedural plot of *Fringe* become more closely intertwined within the larger story arc. He includes a lot of detail regarding narrative play and the interweaving of elements of the plot. However, he does not include some of the playful intertextual cues such as how the actor playing Walter Bishop, John Noble, plays his character with more than a passing resemblance to Vincent Price, emphasising the mad scientist trope. Also, casting Leonard Nimoy in the role of the somewhat dispassionate and logical William Bell is surely worthy of note with reference to the role of Spock in the original series of *Star Trek*.

Telotte's guide illustrates a detailed appreciation of science fiction television. In terms of television criticism, it would interesting to see some textual analysis of setting and character in addition to as a discussion of narrative and formats, as many of the pleasures of the genre are derived from such elements as well as from the story structure. One of the underlying interests emerging within the Telotte's detailed discussion of programmes is the issue of 'post-apocalyptic' styles of SFTV such as *The Walking Dead* and *Revolution*, as these

examples also test the boundaries of the form with a very different mise-en-scene to the conventional image of science fiction.

With a lot to cover, Telotte chooses the narrative model as a way of analysing the codes and structures of SFTV. This approach is informative but can constrain more contemporary considerations of genre transtextuality. The guide also foregoes a sense of the visual that is so often enjoyed within the genre. However, Telotte's conclusion 'New Directions for SFTV' does discuss the transmedia possibilities of interactive synergies between television and video games, changing viewing patterns and extras extending the worlds of SFTV. Telotte ends with the hope that the guide will introduce readers to 'the genre's many inviting visions' (188). The consideration of SFTV as a series of inviting visions is less foregrounded in this guide. The long form SFTV series can offer so many twists and turns that the narrative might be the least tangible element of all and the visions on screen can provide continuity and consistency as a result.

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