Squealing Wheels and Flying Fists


Type of Research: Book Section

Creators: Sargeant, Jack

Description: 312-314pp

The research field is film history. This commissioned chapter on 'road movies' and the human obsession with the car came from Peter Wollen and Joe Kerr for their edited volume on the relationship between people and cars. The volume took a broad approach to this subject and authors were selected who could draw from varying academic disciplines. For example the visual anthropologist Christopher Pinney considered the 'monstrous' phenomenon of cultures divided into hierarchies by the possession of not just cars but particular makes and models of cars whilst the art theorist Michael Barwell commented on the experience of motorway monotony. A classic essay on the Citroen by Roland Barthes was also included. For his chapter the researcher focused on the 'road movie' within the broader context of obsessing about cars. The themes explored included the development of the genre outside the USA where it has been the subject of particular acclaim and the blurring of the genre with other film types such as the coming together of queer cinema and the road movie in The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. The way in which this film crossed the line between cult status and mainstream success is a further aspect of the research. The chapter also explores how the car is frequently employed in film as (literal) vehicle for the expression of aggression. This latter point keyed the title of the chapter evoking the squealing wheels and flying fists of the rapid getaway, the classic exit from a heist.

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13 Monster Jam: The Amazing Guide, 28. 14 See Lincoln, 158, for the relations between the American dream, upward mobility, and professional wrestling. 15 Jack Sargeant, “Squealing Wheels and Flying Fists,” in Autopia, 312. 16 Lincoln, 158. 17 Sargeant, 312. 18 As Julian Danis suggests in “Car Crash Culturization,” in Crash Culture, 307. 19 See Christopher Sharrett, “Crash Culture and American Blood Ritual,” in Car Crash Culture, 323. 20 Morr and Brubaker, 22. 21 Sargeant is speaking here of the prurient sensibility evoked by the crash images in driver's ed films of the '50s and '60 “Squealing brakes can occur for several reasons, usually, if you have some grease or oil on the brake pad, rot or wheel rim or the contact between the braking surfaces is misaligned. New brake pads also need to bed-in for optimum performance,” says Shimans. While contamination is one cause, vibration is another and can indicate poorly set-up brakes.