

Andreas Halskov

Beyond Television

TV Production in the Multiplatform Era

**Beyond Television:
TV Production in the Multiplatform Era**

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Foreword

Television found me, changed me, and made me. From my first viewing to the present day, a modest landscape once defined and tightly controlled by three networks that became a vast inexplicable continent.

At the start, the trick was to find and hold the stories that you loved, precious metal amid the dross. So you watch *The Twilight Zone*, and it teaches you another way to tell stories. So you watch *Saturday Night Live*, and it teaches you another way to laugh. So you watch *Miami Vice*, and it teaches you another way to crime.

So you work on *Twin Peaks*, and it changes your life.

There was a day when finding the shows you loved involved nothing more than the desire to make time for them, modest curation in a context easily held in one's hands (or mind). But that was then and this is -

The Wire and *Lost* and *Life On Mars* and *Stranger Things* and *Utopia* and *Breaking Bad* and *Borgen* and *Sex Education* and *Forbrydelsen* and *Spiral* and *Watchmen*; the world of television is now truly a world. Vast, daunting, and requiring determined exploration rather than the modest curation.

But the experience of it, the loving of it, remains the same. Shows that teach us another way to tell stories, that teach us another way to laugh, that teach us another way to crime. Everything has changed but nothing has changed too. Television will find you, change you, and if you're lucky it will make you too.

Andreas not only understands this, he's written a book about it. Interviews with the men and women who created the television that found us. Further investigation into industrial and systemic alteration in the business that changed us. Valuable insights into the television shows that made us too.

More simply and more accurately: Andreas loves television every bit as much as I (and likely you) do.

Let's read his book together.

- Harley Peyton, writer-producer

Preface & Acknowledgements

[A] major industrial shift is occurring in the nature of viewing devices, modes of production, and distribution systems. [...] Television is no longer associated with authorized and regulated production systems, a universal and familiar device, or any device at all. Television is not a discrete object or a privileged device. It is a visual content that emanates from a wide variety of production systems, embodies all genres and narrative forms, and flows across multiple types of screens and into all manner of electronic gadgets.

- Michael Strangelove, *TV scholar*¹

Standing in the middle of a changing landscape and trying to map that landscape, accounting for the structural changes and their complex impact on production, style and storytelling, is a difficult and daunting task. But also an interesting and hopefully fruitful one. Many scholars argue that the TV landscape is changing, and most practitioners claim that those changes are influencing the way that they produce and tell their stories.² Changes in the industry and infrastructure influence the way that TV series are created and the shape that they take. This narrative is already well-known - eagerly circulated among TV creators, executives, critics and journalists - but behind the popular narrative there is a complex story that involves multiple factors and a long history of experimentation and transformation.

In this book, I explore and try to chart the current TV landscape, focusing primarily on the American TV industry and American TV series from the new millennium (what Trisha Dunleavy calls *the multiplatform era*).³ Though focusing on American television and the American TV industry, I argue that the current TV landscape is a complex and fluid one where TV productions often transgress or connect different territories, industries and distribution technologies.

Beyond Television is a labor of love, but it is also the result of a profound curiosity, a long research phase and a deep exploration. In 2009, I co-wrote two articles on the American TV landscape for the Danish journal *16:9*, and in 2011 I co-edited and -wrote the first Danish anthology on American television in the so-called *cable era* (*Fjernsyn for viderekomne*). That book was soon followed by other monographs, anthologies and articles, exploring specific aspects of the American and global TV landscape. From television comedy to adaptations, remakes and reboots. In 2015, then, I wrote my first English book, *TV Peaks: Twin Peaks and Modern Television Drama*, which used *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) as a concrete example through which to describe the changes in the TV landscape from 1990 to 2015. As part of that book, I interviewed the cast and crew from *Twin Peaks*, and in the last five years I have interviewed more than 100 people from the TV industry, hoping to gain a wider and more profound understanding of TV production and how the practitioners themselves describe the changes in their trade and the TV landscape.

Working with Kim Sørensen, Lasse Lorenzen, Jan Oxholm and HBO Nordic, I have travelled the American TV landscape, visiting popular sets and locations and meeting different practitioners in their homes or at their respective studios. I am greatly indebted to all these creators and craftsmen, and there are far too many for me to mention them all individually. I especially wish to thank the producers and directors behind the major cases in this book – people like Tom Fontana, David Chase, David Simon, Anne Bjørnstad, Eilif Skodvin, Beau Willimon, Kelly Luegenbiehl, Mark Frost, Angela Kang, Jesse Armstrong, Sabrina Sutherland, Tom Perrotta, Mary Harron, Derek Cianfrance, Nic Pizzolatto, Sam Levinson, Tricia Brock, Michael Lannan, Jay Duplass, Susanne Bier, Joel Fields and Peter Gould – and I want to convey my deepest gratitude to Harley Peyton who has helped me while working on this book. In this context, I also wish to thank my former colleagues at the universities of Copenhagen and Aarhus and my current colleagues at the Danish film and TV journal *16:9*, the radio program *Stream and Chill* and *Aarhus Series Festival*. Furthermore, I wish to thank the illustrious TV scholar Kim Akass, who urged me to write for CSTOnline on a regular basis and who has given me a lot of valuable encouragement and feedback while working on this book. The same thing could be said of people like Keld Reinicke, Mikkel Hollænder Jensen, Kim Bøg Brandt, Per Martin Halskov, Esben Bue Halskov and Ingrid Stage, who have willingly shared their time and knowledge. Finally, I want to thank my peer reviewer, my editor (Michael Dam Petersen) and my proofreader (Karen Bek-Pedersen), not to mention the two wonderful artists, Thomas Thorhauge and Thomas Schwartz Larsen, who have designed the cover and the general look of this book. Like a TV series, this book is a collective effort that could not have been achieved without the help and contribution of many different people and institutions.

The TV landscape might be changing rapidly, but I hope my findings will be relevant for many years to come.