



Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries (Postmillennial Pop)

By Derek Johnson

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While immediately recognizable throughout the U.S. and many other countries, media mainstays like X-Men, Star Trek, and Transformers achieved such familiarity through constant reincarnation. In each case, the initial success of a single product led to a long-term embrace of media franchising—a dynamic process in which media workers from different industrial positions shared in and reproduced familiar culture across television, film, comics, games, and merchandising.

In *Media Franchising*, Derek Johnson examines the corporate culture behind these production practices, as well as the collaborative and creative efforts involved in conceiving, sustaining, and sharing intellectual properties in media work worlds. Challenging connotations of homogeneity, Johnson shows how the cultural and industrial logic of franchising has encouraged media industries to re-imagine creativity as an opportunity for exchange among producers, licensees, and even consumers. Drawing on case studies and interviews with media producers, he reveals the meaningful identities, cultural hierarchies, and struggles for distinction that accompany collaboration within these production networks. *Media Franchising* provides a nuanced portrait of the collaborative cultural production embedded in both the media industries and our own daily lives.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Media Franchising* demonstrates that political economy and cultural studies can be systematically integrated, something many have called for but few have achieved as impressively as Derek Johnson. Building on an ideal mix of industrial, cultural, textual, and ethnographic research, Johnson pushes back against the popular view of franchises as monstrous, self-replicating programming bullies to show how contested and complex the industrial cultures are that now produce them. In this scheme, franchises are not the predictable top-down economic outcome of conglomeration, but rather a collective cultural "solution" to volatile economic and technological changes negotiated by cadres of largely anonymous contract media producers. Essential reading for anyone hoping to better understand the churning contemporary mediascape."-John T. Caldwell, author of *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*

"Johnson astutely reveals that franchises are not Borg-like assimilation machines, but, rather, complicated ecosystems within which creative workers strive to create compelling 'shared worlds.' This finely researched, breakthrough book is a must-read for anyone seeking a sophisticated understanding of the contemporary media industry."-Heather Hendershot, author of *What's Fair on the Air?: Cold War Right-Wing Broadcasting and the Public Interest*

About the Author

Derek Johnson is Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is the author of *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* and the co-editor of *A Companion to Media Authorship*.

Users Review

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