

The Evolution of Comedy Vérité from TV to YouTube

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The traditional codes and conventions of documentary style footage have continuously become adopted and mimicked through various development and expansion of film genres. The category of neo-realist films have the primary objective of showcasing reality as if it were a story through combinations of narratives, 'normal' protagonists facing contemporary day-to-day issues within real world settings. These types of films are created heavily based off the inspiration of documentary film practices and concepts such as Vertov's *kino pravda*, often referred to as 'cinema vérité', and the styles of 'observational' and 'direct' cinema. Understanding and identifying the three methods as the dominating influential practices directly ascended from documentary filmmaking, it allows us to further analyze and classify other pieces of contemporary fictions that heavily borrow, it develops and distinguishes itself as a subgenre or 'hybrid' (Hight, 2010). In this paper we will examine the 'mockumentary' as a discourse, how it has led to the introduction and ongoing evolution of 'comedy vérité' within entertainment media and analyze its challenging presence in the online realm through YouTube sensation, David Dobrik.

Mockumentary is often considered both complicated and contradictory (Welsh, 2012) as the genre is primarily identified by the distinctions of what doesn't make it a real documentary (Roscoe & Hight, 2001). The approach of documentary codes and conventions are produced in effort to engage and communicate with the audience's perspectives of reality for the pure purpose of entertainment based off the flexibility of fiction and nonfiction notions (Hight, 2010). The mockumentary heavily utilises documentary aesthetics to further itself as a discourse of the classic documentary (Roscoe & Hight, 2001) and is continuously broadened as the number of genres and media forms increase (Hight, 2010). Hight reinforces the idea that mockumentary

should be recognized as discourse by referencing Nichol's three levels of media practice which

talking directly to the camera, as if they were answering questions and giving reflective responses to a camera crew. This is also what sparks the debate in which *the Office* is more adept at being defined as a mockumentary in comparison to *Arrested Development*, based solely on the fact that the latter barely acknowledges the presence of a camera crew.

Richard Wallace's '*Digital Mockumentary*' examines the revolutionized

footage become a new criterion in assessing a “signifier of reality” and breaks down “the aesthetics and agenda” of what defines documentary as a whole. This is present and can be demonstrated by the creation of ‘vlogs’ on YouTube.

‘Vlogs’ are defined as the “extension of text-based blogging” (Aran, Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2014) where individuals instead “present themselves in online video [format]” (Aran, Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2014) where they are able to express personal reflections or commentaries to a wide audience (Aran, Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2014). Vlogs are clear examples of the appropriation of documentary aesthetics taking place in the online realm of broadcasting. Hight states that these new technologies allow audiences to “effectively play the role of producers and puble] Ó

great!” before it cuts off, introducing the remainder of the video (which is much more regular, ‘a day in the life’ type content. Amongst all of this, Dobrik consistently follows the production practices of a modern comedy vérité

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