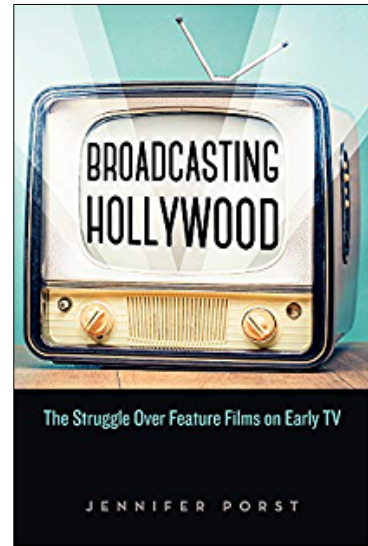


Jennifer Porst, **Broadcasting Hollywood: The Struggle Over Feature Films on Early TV**, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021, 250 pp., \$29.95 (paperback).

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As the growing juggernaut of the streaming world continues to dominate the ever-changing environment of media, it remains to be seen how the television and film industries will adapt in an unpredictable pandemic-based setting. Studying similar historical cases of media convergence, such as Jennifer Porst's **Broadcasting Hollywood: The Struggle Over Feature Films on Early TV**, may prove to be beneficial to our understanding. In Porst's book, we gain a new understanding of how the film and television industries collaborated to adapt to the altered consumer behavior caused by the post-World War II setting in the United States. With the support of primary resources, archival research, and the work of various industry professionals, Porst illustrates a complete synopsis of a significant convergence of media that maintains relevancy to current times. We also learn how the two entertainment industries were restricted by a specific set of circumstances established by various industry and trade associations, highlighting the impact of studying media, television, and film history as a large continuous context rather than as individual collections of occurrences.



Broadcasting Hollywood gives a detailed historical account of the evolving relationship between the film and television industries during the 1940s and 1950s and how feature films made their way to television programming. The book is organized by topic to clearly identify what influenced and caused obstacles, like court cases and regulations, for films to appear on television. Each topic is approached through the lens of media history analysis, with each chapter explaining central issues in chronological order, allowing readers to learn how various subjects are connected in an easy-to-understand method. In this way, Porst demonstrates how specific laws and restrictions prevented Hollywood studios from getting their feature films on television, such as how lawsuits filed by actors Roy Rogers in 1951 and Gene Autry in 1952 affected intellectual property and contract law. Although the topic of law and contract analysis may seem daunting to those who are unfamiliar with the respective jargon and terminology, Porst maintains the frame of illustrating media convergence and transition.

Since the convergence of television and film was affected by many different industries, Porst also identifies key stakeholders and industrial organizations as well as the cinematic groups that had their own idiosyncratic set of rules, such as the National Association of Broadcasters and the Council of Motion Picture Organizations. Moreover, Porst highlights how different governmental associations are significant in television and film history, as certain restrictions can catalyze a domino effect about media contracts and business matter. Overall, by combining historical narrative with comparisons to modern digital media, as well as by identifying key players reining from different industries in an ethnographic method of analysis,

Porst provides a complete overview of how the media convergence was controlled by a wide range of organizations and individuals from a diverse set of industries.

The author's main argument in *Broadcasting Hollywood* is that feature films were delayed for televised viewing, not because of hostility between the two industries but because of a specific set of circumstances, "as a result of a complex combination of industrial, social, legal, and governmental forces" (p. 3). Furthermore, in stark contrast to the long-held belief of the precarious connection between television and film, the author acknowledges that there was interest by Hollywood studios to pursue the new medium to reach new audiences and to adapt to economic and social changes, such as the post-World War II drop in box office sales and the baby boom. Other influences affected this subject as well, such as the regulations made by radio in the late 1940s as well as union and guild contracts in the early 1950s. Additionally, Porst explains that the delay in bringing feature films to television was contributed by Hollywood's slow pace in adapting to the new medium, as many major Hollywood film studios failed to realize that the postwar environment brought significant changes in consumer behavior and moviegoing audiences.

To support her arguments, Porst employs primary sources, such as letters, contracts, and trial transcripts, and explains that mainly studying these types of resources can result in finding new observations from powerful individuals who may not have been previously mentioned in secondary sources. The author acknowledges that primary sources can depict bias and utilizes the work of other media scholars, such as Sherry Ortner's (2013) *Not Hollywood* and John Caldwell's (2008) *Production Culture* to find factual data. Additionally, *Broadcasting Hollywood* also applies the written work of economists, journalists, historians, and technical engineers to portray professional insight from different industries.

To present a central conflict to the book's issue, Porst presents the 1955 antitrust lawsuit *U.S. v. Twentieth Century-Fox, et al.*, which alleged that film studios refused to license or sell their feature films to television. Porst utilizes this lawsuit as a tool to depict the type of relationship between the television and film industry before 1955, as the author acknowledges that there is minimal existing information about this time period regarding archival evidence. The lawsuit also allows Porst to illustrate how radio influenced film and television regulations. In addition, we are offered a glimpse into how Hollywood film studios treated television programming.

In her book, Porst provides an in-depth historical account of how feature films made their way onto television, illustrating an example of how converging different forms of media can be a widespread subject controlled by various stakeholders, industries, and regulations. Although there were sources of tension between the film and television industries, there were more impactful components that contributed to the overall delay in broadcasting feature films on television. *Broadcasting Hollywood* also exemplifies the significant effect of studying film, television, and media history in a continuous framework to understand prominent connections and create academic correlations. Overall, Porst's work is a beneficial tool for those studying media, television, and film history as the landscape of digital media continues to evolve with technological developments.

References

Caldwell, J. T. (2008). *Production culture: Industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

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