



## Alain Delon: style, stardom, and masculinity

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then at least an extension, of Hitchcock's brand persona. Thus, while Olsson is less interested in the commercial and marketing aspects of Hitchcock's brand persona, he manages to make a compelling, if somewhat underhanded auteurist case for the inclusion of the television programmes in Hitchcock's oeuvre.

While the complete and exhaustive study of the commercial uses, the cultural meanings and the afterlife of Hitchcock's brand persona remains as yet to be written, Olsson's *Hitchcock à la carte* marks both an important contribution to the existing literature on Hitchcock and an original approach to a still under-researched aspect not only of Hitchcock's oeuvre, but of film culture more generally.

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### **Alain Delon: style, stardom, and masculinity**

Nick Rees-Roberts and Darren Waldron (eds), 2015

New York, London, Bloomsbury Publishing

pp. iv + 206, illus., notes, bibliography, index, £74.00 (cloth)

*Alain Delon: style, stardom, and masculinity* is an important contribution to academia's renewed interest in star studies, primarily for two reasons. Not only does this edited collection examine a French star, but also a male one. Although stars have been regarded as worthy of scholarly attention for several decades now – largely due to Richard Dyer's seminal text *Stars* (1979) – there still remains a lack of academic accounts on individual stars, particularly male stars. Consisting of 10 scholarly essays which discuss differing aspects of Delon's star image and career, this volume on Delon takes a similar approach to *From Perversion to Purity: The Stardom of Catherine Deneuve* (2008), which was edited by Lisa Downing and Sue Harris, and contains several essays which examine a French star. As with most edited collections, there are a couple of standout chapters, but the essays work together to present a strong argument for the academic importance of both Delon and (male) cinematic stars more generally.

In the introduction, the editors explore the early myth that Delon was a 'fragile but cruel beauty' (p. 1). As they note, during his early career, Delon's face and body were repeatedly emphasised as an erotic spectacle for audiences, while his personal life and relationships (particularly with actress Romy Schneider) created celebrity gossip around him. Most importantly, perhaps, they highlight important issues about male beauty and masculinity, which are both important and timely in film studies. The editors close the introduction by suggesting that Delon's iconicity and longevity led to this re-evaluation of the star, and advise that the book is both opportune and necessary.

Waldron also contributes the first chapter, which explores Delon's early erotic appeal through an analysis of his performances in *Plein soleil* (René Clément, 1960) and *La Piscine* (Jacques Deray, 1969). Waldron convincingly suggests that the

sensual display of Delon's face and body intertextually links the two films, but it can also link most, if not all, of Delon's career more broadly. Moreover, Waldron examines Delon's primary work through the lens of masculinity and the narcissism of male stars, creating common ground on which several other contributors investigate Delon's image across his career.

Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto expand on this by exploring the pleasure that Delon's body holds for various audiences, applying the concept of *emploi* to his screen performances. *Emploi*, according to the authors, takes into account not only the actor's on-screen performance and off-screen reception (like persona studies), but also considers the spectator's experience. They note that this method offers the opportunity to understand the international scope of an actor's body from a local point of view. While they make a case for *emploi* over persona studies, it is not as strong an argument as the subsequent chapter, in which Gwénalle Le Gras investigates Delon's youthful appeal in 1950s/1960s French cinema, and how his rise to stardom was intensely linked to details of his private life, romances and appearances in *Paris Match* before any of his films were released.

In her chapter, Catherine O'Rawe declares the lack of scholarly attention paid to Delon's star image and performance style, in addition to academia's marginalisation of male beauty and its 'taken for granted' state. She suggests that this is why male beauty has escaped analysis in the Italian context; but it still remains true of most national and international cinemas, including Hollywood. Although O'Rawe only examines Delon's performance in *Rocco and his Brothers* (Luchini Visconti, 1960), she raises wider questions about whether his being regarded as 'too beautiful' obscured his performance style. Furthermore, as a star with great visual appeal, she discusses whether the dubbing of Delon's voice into Italian supports or undermines his position as erotic object of the camera's gaze.

Leila Wimmer considered Delon's later 'tough guy' persona in relation to his on-screen partnership with Jean Gabin. Using the 1960s heist films *Mélodie en sois-sol* (Verneuil, 1963) and *Le Clan des Siciliens* (Verneuil, 1969), Wimmer proposes that these films mark a turning point in Delon's career, and effectively highlights the contrast between the youthful Delon and the mature Gabin. Mark Gallagher investigates Delon's global stardom, including his Hollywood films, and how his exhibition as a cosmopolitan icon alludes to his earlier image through both narrative and characterisation. Isabelle Vanderschelden moves beyond Delon's screen work by considering his roles behind the camera as director, producer and screenwriter. Likewise, Barbara Lebrun ponders Delon's unusual (but limited) musical recordings. Nick Rees-Roberts reflects on Delon's position as a fashion icon, particularly through the analysis of a 2009/2010 Christian Dior advertising campaign which used footage of the younger Delon to sell an image and their product.

In the final chapter, Sue Harris inspects how ageing stars are presented on screen, an area which has received much interest in star studies recently. More specifically, Harris investigates how Delon, a once beautiful but now ageing star, is viewed in the twenty-first century. As Harris notes, Delon's recent roles have allowed Delon to display a more mature version of himself, rather than expose a performative or physical decline. This closing chapter is compelling; highlighting important issues stars with longevity face, as well as issues around the ageing process and audience expectations.

Overall, this is an academically stimulating and entertaining collection in which every chapter has a sound scholarly argument. The chapters complement each other, while working individually to explore Delon's on- and off-screen career from its conception to the present day. The bibliography is rich with academic texts on stars, masculinity and French cinema, but also includes articles from contemporary magazines and interviews with Delon. Bloomsbury have recently helped to promote the academic study of male stars, including Brad Pitt and Sidney Poitier. This volume on Delon is exciting, relevant and important for the advancement of film studies; a must read for anyone interested in stars.

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### **British TV Comedies: cultural concepts, contexts and controversies**

Jürgen Kamm and Birgit Neumann (eds.), 2015

Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan

pp. xiii + 363, index, £68 (cloth), \$105 (hardcover)

Kamm and Neumann's edited *British TV Comedies* is distinctive for its ambitious examination of influential series from the 1950s to the 2000s. According to the editors, the major focus of this volume is the 'politics of humour': 'who makes the joke and with what possible *motives*? Who is the butt of the joke and who is the possible recipient? Who laughs and why? How are jokes related to power relations and to contemporary ideologies? And, finally, comedy relies on deviation, who serves as a norm and who has the power to define normality in our ... increasingly pluralised society?' (9). Each of the 25 authors seeks to answer these questions through tracing elements of continuity as well as critical points of change in television comedy and in British culture's style and form in relation to insights about history, politics and culture. This volume is sensitive to identity formations involving social class, gender, ethnicity, race, and factory labour.

Part I, 'The 1950s and the 1960s: Beginnings of the British Sitcom and the Satire Boom,' spans post the Second World War, post-war hard times and the beginnings of cultural change in the 1960s. Richard Kilborn discusses the affective and foundational elements of *Hancock's Half's Hour* and *Steptoe and Son* exemplary of the 'Golden Age of British Sitcom that had "set the gold standard for future generations"' (33). Bernd Lenz's skilful examination of *Dad's Army* provides a critical analysis of how the series, while not historically 'realistic,' is more productive to consider as 'a medium of popular culture ... preserving the memory of unity during a key period of British history' (38). *Alexander Brock* reiterates much that is now common knowledge about the performers and the format of *The Flying Circus*, but expresses concern about its politics and a critical lack of knowledge transnationally about influences on the Pythons such as *The Goon Show* and the work of Spike Milligan (62–3). Mary Irwin in 'The Rag Trade: "Everybody Out"' focuses on