Chapter 12
Rewarding Work, Representing Work:
The Serious Side of Entertainment in Globalised Award Shows

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ABSTRACT

Award shows are spectacular forms of entertainment that continue to proliferate around the world. This chapter closely examines award broadcasts and their features, especially their televisual production dynamics, and critically interrogates the positive, exciting, popular image of this celebratory form of entertainment. It also considers the differences between globalised and glocalised award telecasts. The chapter argues that these shows provide audiences with representations of work that reflect and endorse values related to work in capitalist societies. In particular, it claims, the shows convey the values of the Protestant work ethic, such as industriousness, diligence, and success. A case study of the Golden Globe Awards and international MTV Awards is used to confirm this argument.

INTRODUCTION

Award shows seem to be almost everywhere; they are a near-ubiquitous part of modern media landscapes around the world, providing viewers with entertainment that features their favourite creative artists and popular media products. The spectacular nature of award telecasts amuses and excites, as well as shocks and astonishes, audiences.

Award shows have been analysed with regard to entertainment generally (English, 2005), but their work-related aspects have escaped aca-demic attention. This chapter fills this deficit in knowledge by analysing the ways in which award telecasts embody and convey work, along with work related-practices, to audiences. In particular, it argues that award shows convey values relating to the Protestant work ethic (Weber, [1904] 1992), such as hard work, high standards, diligence and success.

Additionally, the production dynamics of na-tional and global award shows have been investi-gated (English, 2005), but the distinction between global and glocal shows has not been considered. Consequently, the chapter also analyses the ways

in which award broadcasts have become globalised and glocalised. It focuses on two award shows that aim to provide entertainment: the Golden Globes (a global telecast) and the MTV Awards (a set of glocalised programs). The chapter carefully analyses both types of shows and considers the representations of work and the values that they convey.

The chapter expands current knowledge about entertainment in relation to awards shows: an area lacking in academic literature (English, 2005). In doing so, it also broadens knowledge more generally about award broadcasts (Corless & Darke, 2007; Cosgrave, 2007; Watson & Anand, 2006). These proliferating shows deserve greater academic study and warrant more critical scrutiny, given their status as major international cultural fixtures and their ever-greater consumption of television broadcast time (English, 2005). Also, while there is literature about award shows in relation to business practices (Leverence, 1997; English, 2005), there is limited knowledge about these shows' capitalist aspects.

The chapter begins by examining the nature of entertainment and considering the ways in which award shows fit this classification. In doing so, it considers the role of spectacles and spectacular entertainment, as well as the features that television as a medium offers award telecasts to make them appealing. The chapter then distinguishes between globalised and glocalised awards shows, evaluating the benefits and challenges that both forms of entertainment entail. Next, it discusses the work-related aspects of these shows and the values of the Protestant work ethic that they convey. An analysis of the 2013 Golden Globes ceremony and three MTV Award programs confirms the presence of Protestant work ethic values in the broadcasts. The chapter ends by providing ideas for further research.

BACKGROUND

The world's populations have long been entertaining themselves. Already in eighth-century China and 15th century Europe, individuals were enjoying mass media entertainment in the form of newspapers (Cooper-Chen, 2009). Indeed, most often, entertainment is understood with reference to such tangible items: to media commodities that are "produced, distributed, marketed, exhibited, and consumed … to provide viewers with amusement" (Mirrlees, 2013, p. 8). Yet, entertainment does not always take tangible forms, nor does it necessarily involve amusement or pleasure. As Oliver and Raney (2011, p. 985) point out, individuals consume a variety of entertainment types that do not always provide happiness: "Tragic drama, moving cinema, heartbreaking opera, or poignant novels and poems are but a few examples of entertainment that may be deeply gratifying, but not "enjoyable" in the colloquial sense of the term." Central to this concept, though, is a universal cultural preoccupation (Zillmann, 2000) with deriving emotion from media and communications of various kinds, including events. Entertainment, then, can more broadly be understood as "experiences that are non-routine (outside the limits of daily, routine behaviour) … that provide opportunities for the legitimated expression of emotion and validation of identity" (Surratt, 2001, p. 110).

Entertainment has become a ubiquitous phenomenon: one that "obtrusively dominate[s]" the content of modern media (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000, p. vi). In today's 'entertainment age' (Turner, 2010a), media industries routinely convert information into entertainment. This takes many familiar forms, such as "personalized menu[s] on video aggregators' web-sites", "the soap opera narratives of reality TV" or "a series of spectacular events" (Turner, pp. 160-161).

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