

Resource Review

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Author(s) / Editor(s):	Albert Moran with Justin Malbon
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Review:

Albert Moran with Justin Malbon wrote a very timely book which will be useful for anyone studying and/or researching global television industries. The book deals with what the main author calls 'a central component of the current epoch of television', the global television format. Indeed Moran argues that the large increase in international trade in programme formats represents a major shift in how the television programme content business is organised, whereby there is much more focus now on format packages which are highly adaptable at local level, rather than the traditional licensing of programmes. There are other publications on television programme formats, but they tend to focus on the content and on formats as a genre. Moran's book is especially useful and illuminating as it provides an examination of the institutional background and motivations of the development of global tv formats using interviews with prominent people from the industry.

The book focuses on three realms. The first part looks at the evolution of formats, the means and contexts in which they come about. This includes a good description of what television programme formats are and a historical background. The historical account is rather short, some might expect more detail about the development of the global television format. Some also might find the discussion on the importance of television formats in international trade today a little thin. A few well known examples are mentioned, such as Pop Idol and Big Brother, but more facts and figures about the changes in global trade in tv programme formats would have been useful. The focus in this part is on how television programme formats are developed and what stages they go through in planning, production and distribution. Indeed the book provides a very good insight into this area. Moran very interestingly puts forward the argument that 'the circulation of tv programme formats is a franchising operation where what is licensed between the parties is a set of services rather than a material or tangible product'.

The second realm of the book discusses the international business context of global tv formats. One Chapter describes the agents and markets of tv formats and explores the issues in relation to distribution. Chapter 7 examines the companies which produce these tv formats, Moran provides a good categorisation of them. There is also a chapter on the trade as an industry discussing how the industry organises itself and specifically how the industry association has developed.

The third realm of the book concerns legal issues around global television programme formats. Two chapters are provided here by Justin Malbon on the law regarding tv formats and specifically on the complicated area of copyright. To the legally untrained these discussions are quite instructive providing clear description of the major legal issues with interesting case studies and examples. The complex issue of copyright is well explained discussing the court case between *Survivor* and *Big Brother*. The book also provides some useful appendices including further sources, a list of format companies worldwide and, maybe somewhat unorthodoxly for an academic book, an Endemol proposal form for a tv programme format.

The book was written with different audiences in mind. As the authors argue it can be read as a handbook for the trade, indeed it looks like a very useful handbook taking the reader through the different stages of developing a television programme format including its planning, production and distribution. For the general reader, perhaps most importantly for university students, it provides an insight to how television programme formats are developed and about their organisational background. The

book does not aim to be a critical analysis, indeed Moran argues that it is an introduction to the field and that 'larger conceptual issues are not given sustained attention in these pages'. Albeit one can concede that not everything can be covered in 187 pages (that is the length of the book), some more critical analysis on the organisational background and the economic and cultural impacts of global television formats would have raised the stance of the book.

Nevertheless, the book is a very welcomed one as there are limited publications on the topic, as Moran rightly points out. The book will be useful on second or third year undergraduate courses on television, globalisation and in general courses looking at current trends in the media. It would be also useful on some postgraduate courses on television and television industries.