

Run, Angel, Run: serial production and the biker movie 1966-72

In her study of the recurring figure of Fu Manchu, Ruth Mayer writes, “Seriality relies on iconicity, on emblematic constellations, and on recognizable images, figures, plots, phrases, and accessories that, once established can be rearranged, reinterpreted, recombined, and invested with new significance and thus constitute major parts of the serial memory that upholds complex serial narratives and representational networks in the first place.” Her conception of seriality, however, does not rest here, but is based on the proposition that it is self-generating. The context and process involved in the fabrication and consumption of a serial form are paramount. Seriality, she argues, arises from “concrete formal, material and institutional foundations.” Using the 1966-1972 cycle of outlaw biker movies as my test case, I consider how the narrative conceits and the formal devices of serial film – its repetitions - are imbued in their production, distribution and reception. Seriality, I argue, is never just a question of form and content.

Within and outside of the cycle, actors and character types, stories and sequences, formal and stylistic elements are shared and repeated, borrowed and stolen. This process of interchange is part of the concept of seriality, but it is only a part. Following the direction taken by Mayer, it is the mechanics of serial production, the aggregate of its many parts, which must be contended with. It is not just the films that are of significance, but also the demands of the market place and the ability of filmmakers to work within this context and supply a particular type of picture in an effective and economic manner, one that meets the need of exhibitors and satisfies the intended audience.

Peter Stanfield is a professor of film at the University of Kent. He has written two monographs on the Western and a substantial body of research on popular music and film. Recent publications include *Maximum Movies-Pulp Fictions: Film Culture*

and the Worlds of Samuel Fuller, Mickey Spillane, and Jim Thompson (2011), which takes a long look at our fascination with a pulp aesthetic, and *The Cool and the Crazy: Pop Fifties Cinema* (2015) that examines cycles of sensational movies produced to capitalize upon current events, moral panics, and popular fads. He is currently working on a full-scale study of serial production and the 1960/70s biker movie cycle.