

## Alternate Reality

Imagine if, when the movie *Some Like It Hot* opened in cinemas in 1939, the truth about the characters Josephine and Geraldine was revealed right after they joined the band. Or if the audience of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at London theatre in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was first given published papers that recounted the history of King Macbeth, and the background of the other characters. This is how modern-day cinema works, as trans-media storytelling. We are storytellers who are able to work across media because of technology.

How does one develop a story and characters that can reach audiences in every part of the world? For example, if you live in an underdeveloped region, how do you successfully reach your audience? In order to do this, we as storytellers have to get a better sense of the people that make up our audience – who they are, what they want and what they can afford.

The truth is that much of our audience cannot afford the basic necessities of life. At least 80% of the population lives on less than \$10 a day and thus they cannot go to the cinema or buy a DVD. But almost everyone seems to have access to satellite TV; almost everyone seems to have a cell phone. As such, the great pleasure of classic cinema is an individual pleasure, as this media—and free media more generally—has become the new culture. If a new generation of filmmakers is trying to reach as many people as possible, then it needs to provide content for those who will only engage with one media platform and for those who don't have much time. An important responsibility for anyone who works across different media is to understand how to offer a range of engagement options, as well as content that targets different skill levels and different time availabilities.

Cross-media and interactive/immersive storytelling describe how to build story worlds that span across multiple platforms, engage audiences in powerful new ways and travel across settings. While conventional cinema cannot be adapted for these transitory viewing forms, internet cinema and video has the potential to do so, which opens up a vast potential market. Today's young people are growing up in a connected world with technology that seems completely natural to them, and this digital natives' audience is engaging with media across multiple platforms and moving from a passive viewing experience to active collaboration. This how the art of cinema has changed.

One other medium that has allowed for this shift is the web itself, and the idea of living in a multimedia environment. Where media contents flows fluently between platforms, it opens up the new possibilities for storytelling to speak. This is the essence of what we call web cinema. The other aspect of this movement is that the web technology allows us to talk about a concept of cross media where filmmakers are creating content and story-worlds instead of just one film experience. How does this new medium of cinema preserve the pleasure for audience? Cross media aims to increase the enjoyment and the challenge of understanding technology-based media in films and to emphasize their improvement to the cultural, social and economic life of people. The artist's role is to explore, but at the same time, to question, challenge and transform the technologies that they utilize. The great pleasure of today's cinema is in an active

collaboration – voting, sharing, commenting, discussing, tweeting and so on. Collaboration is adding to cinema today: be it through fan fiction, creating videos or illustrations. It is providing new content that you as author are free to embrace or reject. It can be created with the idea of negative space to lead the movie to re-dramatize the dramatic moments. To build a metaphysical state and to experience the unique particularity of contemplative cinema. These empty spaces with profuse hidden signs give more content and more power of interpretation to the audience. Spectators enjoy the greatest freedom not in the way that they manipulate films but in the ways that they can interpret them.

For instance, *Shirin* is a film by Iranian auteur Abbas Kiarostami. What *Shirin* shows us—and indeed, all it shows us—is an audience of more than 100 women who are deeply absorbed in watching a film we never get to see. Based on the powerful 12th Century Persian poem by Nazami, the film-within-the-film is a story of star-crossed lovers and female self-sacrifice that is as well known in Iran as *Romeo and Juliet* is in the West. The movie explores the potential of cinema, stimulating and challenging the viewer's imagination to an extraordinary degree. We are free to imagine what we wish to be so.

The main goal of today's cinema is to show that there is no difference between the filmmaker and the audience. We all share the collective effect of our audio-visual media society. The key to this newborn cinema is in culture. The components of meaning in cross media articulation are inseparable from various social, intellectual and cultural developments.

This cinema is dedicated to the emphasis of audience interactivity in order to shape meaningful experiences, to allow the audience to be a creator. This is how the new generation of filmmakers is trying to move away from the current situation, in which it is extremely difficult to pay for filmmaking tools that they themselves don't even own, and that their audience is not able to afford. This is how they share the process of creation with their spectators. And it is the way the artistic economy and the financial economy work together.

The question is, what are we getting out of this experience, and what are we *not* getting that the classic audience in Hamlet's Shakespeare did get? Until our web culture is fully realized, it may yet be too soon to tell. Nonetheless, even though the traditional storytelling platform may no longer exist, at the end of the day, we all still want to hear a story.