Introduction: Un/social cinema – Audience decorum revisited

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The following articles are framed around the assertion that cinema audiences can be as unwieldy, wild and dynamic as the films that play on the screen. In this Themed Section on the subject of cinema-going behaviour, etiquette and decorum, we have sought to canvas a wide range of cultural contexts, technological innovations or disruptions and time periods. Throughout, our aim has been to continue the task of questioning just how cinema and screen culture broadly is experienced and engaged with day-to-day *in-situ* and, in the process, how it is reshaped and animated by the audience. Today, screen media are ubiquitous and very often experienced in relative isolation on laptops and hand-held devices within intimate, private spaces and virtual cocoons of seclusion carved out of public space – as when travelling on public transport, for instance. Yet, cinemas continue to operate despite ailing business models and screen media that is accessed online involves exciting new means of social interaction.

To some extent, cinema-going is forced to respond to the affordances of digital networking and online modes of engagement – even when seeking to preserve historical formats and traditional exhibition norms. Many consider the intrusion of digital technologies a threat – and this idea is nowhere more evident than in relation to audience disruption via texting, phone apps and second screening, as canvassed in the first three articles featured here by **James Blake, Dario Llinares and Tessa Dwyer**. Yet, as proceeding articles by **Stephen Gaunson** and **Jennifer Coates** go on to explore, historical modes of cinema-going have rarely produced model audiences. In fact, the very idea of audiences sitting quietly in darkened theatres is a somewhat relative concept, absent from how exhibitors and showmen (talking directly to the screen as the films played) established the idea of audience engagement during the formative period of the cinema. While the concentration of these articles is on the current way that audiences are being encouraged to

think and behave differently while at the cinema, it is important to be reminded how audience decorum has never been stable and consistent. In fact, during the silent period, it was more often the case that films would play in auditoriums with the house-lights on.

The paradox of disruptive and disrespectful audiences is examined in articles by **Diana Sandars** and **Rea Amit** that explore the significant role that cultural aspects play in audience responses and behaviour at the cinema. What is apparent in both of these articles— as well as those by **Kirsten Stevens**, **Helen W. Kennedy** and **Sarah Atkinson** — is how audience behaviour dramatically shifts when the cinema experience becomes a lively, audience event that is attached (via an abstract code of conduct) to the mainstream Hollywood experience. Whereas Sandars and Amit are more centrally concerned with cultural difference and child or foreign audiences, **Stevens, Kennedy, and Atkinson** focus on the temporal and ontological complexities of co-presence and 'liveness', examining varied ways in which audiences are asked to directly engage with cinema as a live, one-off experience.

The dossier opens with **James Blake**'s 'Second Screen interaction in the cinema: Experimenting with transmedia narratives and commercialising user participation', which explores some recent films that have integrated the 'second screen' phenomenon into their make-up, encouraging audiences to augment the cinema experience via phones, mobile apps, gameplay and a range of transmedia content and contact points. Discussion also extends to a range of marketing and paratextual material, and to the ways in which second screening can facilitate interactive advertising and commodification processes. Questioning whether or not such modes of active spectatorship threaten the sanctity and immersive-ness of the cinema experience, Blake ultimately seeks to unpack concepts of distraction and disruption within the social and collective setting of the cinema auditorium.

The second screen theme is carried through into the article 'Please turn your phone on' by **Dario Llinares** presenting the findings from a recent audience research project conducted with students and staff at the University of Brighton. A fascinating, and somewhat reassuring point for cultural conservatives, is how the students only enjoyed the second screen experience as a novelty and point of change, rather than something they would like to see implemented each and every week in a film course. At the same time, second screenings led to some exciting pedagogical outcomes, particularly around focus and critical thinking.

While Llinares' research project incorporates Twitter hashtags and tweeting, another type of in-movie texting is explored by **Tessa Dwyer** in her article 'Hecklevision, barrage cinema and bullet screens: An intercultural analysis'. In the phenomena Dwyer explores, text comments by audience members interact intrusively with screen content, sometimes even to the point of obscuring the image altogether. Dwyer argues that the related, yet culturally distinct modes of interactive viewing offered by Hecklevision, barrage cinema and bullet screens online are best examined in concert, as converging currents of subcultural play, bad-film associations and digital accessibility permeate all three.

In 'Socializing the audience: Going to the cinema in post-war Japan', **Jennifer Coates** observes with interest the role envisioned for cinema by the Allied Powers in Occupation-era Japan in efforts to 'democratize' the country and introduce gender equality. Combining audience memories of past cinema-going practices with archival material, Coates considers how, in many cases, the gender equality message that the Allied forces sought to spread through cinema failed to reach its target, precisely due to gendered modes of viewing and socialising.

Stephen Gaunson also takes a historical approach to discussing the cinema audience. Concentrating on how audiences were discussed in the printed press during the formative decades of the cinema in Australia, similarly to Coates, Gaunson notes how women featured prominently in discourse around the cinema. Despite many reports heralding the perilous dangers in which women could find themselves while in the darkened auditorium of the cinema, first-hand accounts by the female movie-mad-fans tells a very different story of the liberating effect that the moving-pictures had on their otherwise humdrum lives. Further to this, Gaunson traces the strategies that exhibitors implemented to combat those unruly and wildly behaved juvenile cinema-going boys.

In 'Sing and go wild', **Diana Sandars** continues the conversation around the reputation and reality of young audiences at the cinema. Using an auto-ethnographic approach supported by embodiment and genre theories, she argues that factors such as the confines of the cinema space itself and the food and beverages consumed, play a huge role in how audiences are encouraged to behave. The affective dissolve between diegetic fantasy space and cinema real-world space is now capitalised on, particularly by the use of 'tweenie' music artists to actively encourage a rowdy affective response, like dancing in the aisles, as a positive rather than 'unsocial' characteristic of children's cinema.

Focusing on the Japanese craze for popular Indian films which began with the 1998 film *Muthu*, **Rea Amit**'s article 'Shall we dance, Rajni?: The Japanese cult of Kollywood' explores transnational film circuits and foreign-film fandoms. As Amit notes, this cult fandom has even led to the emergence of a novelty 'masala' mode of participatory exhibition not limited to Indian films. Significantly, however, for Amit, this Japanese fandom around Indian cinema is more attuned to local mores than global discourse or diversity and is hence decidedly *un*social despite its collective, participatory nature.

The final set of articles in this Themed Section explore the behaviour of audiences at event and festival screenings. **Kirsten Stevens** argues digital technologies are plotting emerging lines of connectivity by establishing novel modes of participation and viewer behaviour at film festivals. This research explores the tension that emerges from festivals balancing their cinephile identity against the impulse to engage with technological change. Focusing on audiences, Stevens explores the changes that have accompanied the increased presence of the internet and personal web devices within the festival space.

Continuing a festival/event approach, **Helen W. Kennedy** explores the recent phenomenon of *Secret Cinema.* Through a detailed analysis of the *Secret Cinema*'s most successful undertaking to date — the presentation of Baz Luhrmann's 2001 *Moulin Rouge!* –

Kennedy examines the irreconcilable paradox between its alleged political intentions and this event as the final and full realisation of the complete commodification of all aspects of participant behavior and affective engagement.

To conclude, **Sarah Atkinson** investigates the first-of-its-kind film event *Lost in London LIVE*. Shot in one take, in real time, with one camera, entirely on location in London in the early hours of Friday 20th January 2017, it was simultaneously broadcast live to 604 cinemas in America (and to one cinema in the UK). As a stand-alone experience, with a short lead-in, temporally and spatially bound, this event presented a unique opportunity in audience studies research. As well as revealing new ways in which live cinema formats impact upon audience motivations, expectations and pleasures, Atkinson also details the challenges and opportunities of mobilising research into live cinema phenomena.

We hope you enjoy this wide-ranging issue on audience decorum as much as we've enjoyed working with the authors of these great essays.