



Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema (Comedia)

Yvonne Tasker

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While films such as *Rambo*, *Thelma and Louise* and *Basic Instinct* have operated as major points of cultural reference in recent years, popular action cinema remains neglected within contemporary film criticism. *Spectacular Bodies* unravels the complexities and pleasures of a genre often dismissed as 'obvious' in both its pleasure and its politics, arguing that these controversial films should be analysed and understood within a cinematic as well as a political context.

Yvonne Tasker argues that today's action cinema not only responds to the shifts in gendered, sexual and racial identities which took place during the 1980s, but reflects the influences of other media such as the new video culture. Her detailed discussion of the homoeroticism surrounding the muscleman hero, the symbolic centrality of blackness within the crime narrative, and the changing status of women within the genre, addresses the constitution of these identities through the shifting categories of gender, class, race, sex, sexuality and nation. *Spectacular Bodies* also examines the ambivalence of supposedly secure categories of popular cinema, questioning the existing terms of film criticism in this area and addressing the complex pleasures of this neglected form.

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