

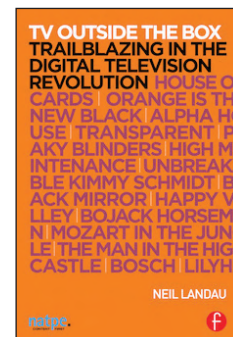
## Critical Book Reviews

LANDAU, N. *TV Outside the Box. Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution.*  
New York: Focal Press, 2016, 456 p.  
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### Television that isn't watched on the TV

Neil Landau has worked as a producer and screenwriter for series such as *Melrose Place* (Fox), *The Magnificent Seven* (CBS) and *The Secret World of Alex Mack* (Nickelodeon). He's also been involved in animated feature films including *Tad, the lost explorer* and *Capture the Flag*. But his relationship with the media industry does not end there as he's acted as a script consultant for several companies such as Sony Pictures and Warner Bros and is also responsible for the narrative television programme in the *Film, Television and Digital Media* department at UCLA.

Landau's track record is important for us to appreciate the content of his fourth book, *TV Outside the Box. Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution* (2016). In this work the author explores the new universe of the OTT (over-the-top) networks emerging in the United States that are transforming the traditional audiovisual model. He analyses their business model, who is behind them and how, thanks to technology, they are altering the way audiovisual content is consumed and created.

Landau bases his study on more than fifty interviews with producers, screenwriters, business people and those responsible for the "new television" that is being reinvented by the minute and which even algorithms don't dare to predict. These conversations are too extensive and, given Landau's background, would benefit from at least some story development to guide the reader, as well as a more educational and less entrepreneurial style. In fact, the style of writing isn't academic and is aimed at media experts with some prior knowledge of the audiovisual sector.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, *The New Disruptors*, chapter 1, *Gamechangers* focuses on the "revolutionaries" of change. Landau therefore starts his book with the heads of networks that distribute their content via the internet such as Netflix, Amazon Studios, Hulu, Sony Crackle, CW Seed, Pivot, SEESO, AwesomenessTV and Greek & Sundry;

networks to which Landau also adds YouTube, Vimeo and Vice TV.

To explore the new era of audiovisual entertainment without getting lost, in chapter 2, *New Business Models and Platforms*, Landau offers a glossary of digital vocabulary and clarifies various acronyms such as CDN (Content Distribution Network), AVOD (Advertising-supported Video On Demand) and SVOD (Subscription-supported Video On Demand).

In chapter 3, *Comparing the Brands*, Landau looks deeper into the history of the media industry in the United States, from the start of television (ABC, CBS, NBC and then Fox) to the wide range of media platforms that appeared with the emergence of the internet. In spite of their apparent diversity, Landau claims that "network gatekeepers still control distribution and content" (p. 126). And not only that; he also warns of the huge power held by internet distributors, genuine monopolies. This is a very useful chapter for teachers and those interested in the structure of the media, with illustrations that help to understand the developments in the media ecosystem and how large conglomerates are reacting to the bold proposals on the internet.

In the second section of the book, *Trailblazing Content Creators*, Landau shares with his readers the keys to success of content that has broken the rules of the game, such as the new subscriber-based business models that have liberated series from interruptions by advertising and the pursuit of large audiences, resulting in trailblazing content as explained in chapter 4, *Niche Is the New Mainstream*. Here he details how ground-breaking series on Amazon (*Alpha House*, *Transparent*, *Mozart in the Jungle*) and on Netflix (*House of Cards*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* and *Peaky Blinders*) have forged new paths in audiovisual narrative. These series have transcended certain conventions, have brought more diversity and authenticity to characters and storylines, as well as breaking with stereotypes and going beyond the politically correct in both language and plot (chapter 5, *Breaking Down Barriers*).

This boom in creativity has also altered the customary genres, as explained in chapter 6, *A New Spin on Established Genres*. Series such as *True Detective*, *Luther*, *Bosch*, *Black Mirror*, etc, and also adult animation, which has flourished in a more revolutionary way (chapter 7, *The Next Iteration of Adult Animation*) as well as talk shows (chapter 10, *Talk is Cheap*) and music and cooking programmes (chapter 11, *Beyond MTV, Food as Art, Digital Magazines*). Even webisodes (chapter 9) have helped to develop a different kind of advertising that tells stories. Another of the issues mentioned by Landau is the opportunity provided by OTT networks to cancel series early (chapter 8, *Life After Broadcast*) and the importance of fans throughout the entire process.

In the third part of the book, *(R)evolution*, Landau doesn't forget that technology has altered the cinematographic model (chapter 12, *The impact of Digital Television on Cinema*), providing the example of Marvel comics and how these have explored the new media. In the last chapter, *Emerging voices in the Digital Realm (and beyond)*, Landau interviews David Anaxagoras (a former student) and Zander Lehmann, both creators and executive producers, with the aim of offering inspiring models to spur on future generations.

In his book's conclusion, Landau puts forward the pros and cons of this new television whose content is available on the internet and reveals how, in spite of resistance by some, we can no longer renounce today's mode of audiovisual consumption. To complete his analysis and give it credibility, Landau mentions piracy: "a virus that infects all media" (p. 418). Although he admits that no-one has been able to find a viable antidote, he proposes models that make it worth paying for the audiovisual experience received: high definition content at an affordable price (p. 418).

This book is thought-provoking for academics, students, professionals and media directors. It's worth reading because it shows what's happening in a pioneering country in media terms, namely the United States, and makes predictions that, albeit with many differences, could be adapted to other markets. As a major feature, of note is the business focus, key in North America: content is created that helps to sustain the industry financially and, to do so, Landau seems to have forgotten one important player: the audience, which surely warrants a chapter in his book.