

Book Review on *Moving Images: Making Movies, Understanding Media*

Tim BODZIONEY

Columbia College Chicago, USA

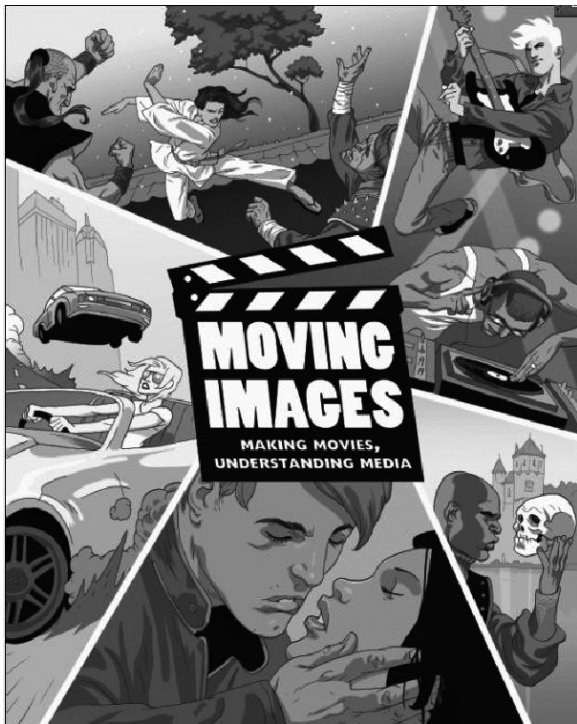
Moving Images: Making Movies, Understanding Media, a new textbook by Carl Casinghino and published by Delmar/Cengage Learning 2011, is designed to combine motion picture production with media studies for a holistic approach to the topic. Interestingly, the project is aimed not just for professionally minded film students. In fact, its learning objectives are intended for all students to develop their collaborative, organizational, and creative skills and to enhance their media literacy.

Concepts and skills are introduced thematically so that instructors are never limited to a particular product or technology. The organization of the book is arranged so that there are paired themes

in successive chapters and across each half of the book. It is clear that the progression of material is designed around communication: how to understand the language of motion pictures and how to use the tools of moving images. It seems that the outlay of the units - along with the critical and creative thinking prompts, the discussion-enhancing features, and its basic adaptability to the semesters of the school year - should lend the text to optimal classroom implementation. Its materials include templates and curriculum support for use in the language arts classroom, for digital production, and in communications and media studies.

In addition to the effectiveness of the textbook's structure is the compelling nature of its content. Casinghino incorporates a progression of the history of the moviemaking process, fundamental details about a wide range of filmmaking crafts, and a truly diverse range of movie references, from big-budget extravaganzas to thematically challenging international fare to the work of filmmakers far outside of the mainstream. It is quite a feat to see *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* referenced on the same page as Jean Vigo-and for it to make sense.

The book features an accessible text with hundreds of high-quality color illustrations. There are analytical, creative writing, and project exercises at the end of each chapter as well as a glossary. Additionally, with each chapter is a "Close-Up" feature with a contemporary filmmaker, which provides personal perspectives for student understanding of media creation. Director Nanette Burstein, screenwriter Pamela Gray, cinematographer Hiro Narita, and documentary editor Deborah Hoffmann are among those interviewed. Additionally, forms such as the commercial, informational, or promotional subject are explored in creative projects



and media analyses intended to develop evaluative abilities.

The book also comes with a DVD with interactive editing files and short films for study. The files provide material for students to learn about editing by doing hands-on work, and they offer refreshing alternatives to the standard dull “tutorial.” The shorts are aligned with the chapters and feature a wide range of styles, including works by such internationally recognized filmmakers as Nash Edgerton, Mark Osborne, and Steve Pasvolsky. There are a number of inspiring pieces such as the bilingual film *Immersion* by Richard Levien and *Looking Back* by Emile Bokaer. *Time Persists* by Matt Silva offers a visually striking and thematically compelling piece that was made with means similar to those available to most students.

One reviewer has remarked, “This book by Carl Casinghino breaks down the traditional conception of a ‘textbook’ and enables students to begin thinking like filmmakers. What I love about this book is that it embraces every style of filmmaking from blockbuster to gritty-indie and demonstrates through stunning visuals and crisp explanation, the tools that lie at the very core of every great film. Whether students have \$10 budgets or \$100,000 budgets; whether they have handycams or the very best equipment, this book shows how to make the most of it all and make *real* movies - from the script to the cutting room.”

By examining media communication and filmmaking techniques through a “showing” rather than “telling” approach, Casinghino brings media literacy skills to the forefront as he makes motion picture production accessible to the novice and more comprehensible to even the skilled director, cinematographer, editor, or producer. The book works to demonstrate the art of effective on-screen

storytelling through its series of thematically organized chapters. Clearly, *Moving Images* wants first and foremost to get students excited about interpreting and making movies. I recommend it to any teacher or student who wants to better instruct or learn how to watch and make movies.

Author:

Tim Bodzioney
Coordinator of Academic Technology, Columbia College,
Chicago

Received: 6/3/2010, revised 8/15/2010, accepted: 11/20/2010