



Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling

Jason Mittell

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Over the past two decades, new technologies, changing viewer practices, and the proliferation of genres and channels has transformed American television. One of the most notable impacts of these shifts is the emergence of highly complex and elaborate forms of serial narrative, resulting in a robust period of formal experimentation and risky programming rarely seen in a medium that is typically viewed as formulaic and convention bound.

Complex TV offers a sustained analysis of the poetics of television narrative, focusing on how storytelling has changed in recent years and how viewers make sense of these innovations. Through close analyses of key programs, including *The Wire*, *Lost*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Sopranos*, *Veronica Mars*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and *Mad Men* the book traces the emergence of this narrative mode, focusing on issues such as viewer comprehension, transmedia storytelling, serial authorship, character change, and cultural evaluation. Developing a television-specific set of narrative theories, *Complex TV* argues that television is the most vital and important storytelling medium of our time.

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