HOW TO RIDE A LION

A Call for a Higher Transmedia Criticism

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Executive Summary

As we move past the "Transmedia 101" stage of definitions and early experiments, the next stage of development for transmedia experiences is the creation of transmedia criticism.

Such a move is not without its challenges. Some troubles facing this evolution include how transmedia criticism is inherently difficult (Should transmedia criticism only focus on transmedia's unique characteristics? Should it evaluate how well each individual component performs as an example of its medium? Must a transmedia critic be ‘fluent’ in every medium in a franchise?), and how unleashing a horde of vicious critics on a medium still in its infancy could be horrifically damaging. Finally, there’s the question of where such criticism might ideally begin, as such criticism is likely to evolve in three distinct directions - first in an industry-educating role like that of E.W. Sargent in the early days of cinema, second in an "educate the public sphere" role like that of early literary criticism in 18th-century England, and third in the lonelier role of isolated education to which literary criticism eventually found itself exiled.

Despite these issues, the development of a robust system of transmedia criticism will be well worth the difficulty. As the future of entertainment becomes increasingly dominated by transmedia experiences, the entertainment industry will require both more informed practitioners (who will need both insights into leading transmedia experiences and a shared language of transmedia akin to the language of cinema) and a broader audience for transmedia as a medium (who will desire ways to find out about new transmedia experiences and to determine which such experiences are worth their time). All of these breakthroughs can be attained through a robust transmedia criticism.