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BOOK REVIEW: SWEET AND SAVAGE: THE WORLD THROUGH THE SHOCKUMENTARY FILM LENS

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nationality inherent in the activity. More specifically, those who have scholarly interest in ballroom dance and in dance film studies will find the book engaging and informative. I can imagine using this text in a course dealing with gender or sexuality construction in a number of subject areas (film, dance, theater, sports) in American popular culture.

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Savage and Sweet: The World Through the Shockumentary Film Lens.
Mark Goodall. London: Headpress, 2006.

Perhaps no film genre is more maligned by critics and scholars than the Mondo film or the Shockumentary. The Mondo film phenomenon began in 1962 with *Mondo Cane* which was directed by Italian filmmakers Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi. Today, forty-five years later, through reality shows, contests, and films, the basic premise of the Mondo film permeates every part of our popular culture. Blue Underground Films' recent DVD release of the *Mondo Cane Collection*, dubbed the "most controversial box set of all time," sold out and now goes for collector's prices. One of the most severe and graphic anti-slavery movies ever made, *Addio Zio Tom (Farewell Uncle Tom 1971)*, is included in this box-set.

Most critics and scholars ignored or dismissed the Mondo film as an illegitimate genre not worth studying. With *Savage and Sweet*, this oversight has been rectified. Mark Goodall, a professor of Informatics at the University of Bradford, and the coordinator of the annual BFF Crash Cinema Symposium, has written the first academic, and honest treatment of the genre. One reason Mondo films have been so maligned is that they portray the "most outrageous elements" in society in order to garner a fierce response from the audience. In addition to their blatant exploitation of various cultures, some of the films contain staged events, which lead many critics to dismiss the idea that Mondo films are true documentaries.

Goodall argues three important ideas throughout the book: (1) Mondo films are an significant and powerful aspect of film history; (2) today's media output owes a considerable debt to the "aesthetics

and politics of the Mondo film . . .”; and (3) the Mondo film belongs to the “high” genres of documentaries (and) . . . the *avant garde* as much as they do to exploitation, trash, and shock cinema (8). Even so-called “objective” documentaries have a certain point of view that the filmmaker is trying to get across. To Goodall’s credit, he has reprinted director Gualtiero Jacopetti’s 1966 article, “Considerations on the Documentary Film.” Like other film genres, the documentary is a personal and subjective form of expression and one cannot expect the “whole truth” from it. The documentary can, however, express bits of genuineness and is a way to communicate “moral, social, political, (and) . . . psychological ideas” to the public (147). A documentary is a form of spectacle, and deserves to be seen in a theatre with “many people watching it” (153).

Goodall traces the roots of the Mondo film to art films like Georges Franju’s 1949 film, *La Sange des Betes* (*Blood of the Beasts*). He analyzes, discusses, and criticizes the most important Mondo films. Goodall is not uncritical of all Mondo films. For example, he calls the infamous *Faces of Death* series “insincere,” and a “cheap facsimile of a mondo film” lacking in any redeeming quality (123–26).

Another way Mondo has influenced modern filmmaking is through the use of the “shock cut,” a film-editing device that is quick and startling, hitting the viewer in the face. This overused technique is found in modern horror films like *Hills Have Eyes*, *Hostel*, and *Saw III*.

Savage and Sweet also contains a section on film composers including Ennio Morricone and the criminally unnoticed Ric Ortalani (who received an Oscar nomination for the theme song of *Mondo Cane* in 1962). This groundbreaking book should be in all academic libraries, and could be used in courses that discuss transgressive, exploitation, or art cinema. Mondo films are not easy to watch, and the content is often disturbing. However, through Mondo films, we see a glimpse of ourselves, which is not always comfortable.

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