

## **(KATRI) JOHANNA MANNINEN: PRESENT AND FUTURE OF FILM & TV 1 (2)**

The film and television industry is going through major changes. This transformation process began with digital video and has been accelerating with the video on demand (VOD) services.

From a screenwriter's point of view the future looks bright. The demand for high quality content is at all time high and growing. The creators are encouraged to try new ways of telling stories, push boundaries with their themes and to be more ingenious and innovative than ever before.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time the competition for the audience's time and attention is all time high, too. Those unable to cherish the new world of VOD, serial storytelling and emerging technologies will fail.

### **MORE STREAMING**

---

Netflix and other VOD services have changed the way we watch television (and laptops, tablets and phones) in just a few years. We "binge-watch" a season's worth of episodes in one weekend. "Netflix and Chill" instead of going to the movies for a date.

The number of Netflix subscriptions in Finland more than tripled from 2012 to 2015 and is expected to reach one million in a few years<sup>2</sup>. Popularity of HBO, Amazon Prime, Viaplay and Finnish VOD services like Yle Areena, C-More and Elisa Viihde are on the rise, too<sup>3</sup>.

These new services don't change just the way we watch films and series – they've begun to change the way the screenwriters tell stories. An episode written for Netflix doesn't have to fill a certain slot. It's length can be adjusted to fit the story. In the wonderful world of VOD the audience is the most important – and only – customer. And what we, the audience, really want, is fresh and original stories that surprise, inspire, challenge, engage and make us feel deeply.<sup>4</sup>

Netflix has taught its users to watch shows with subtitles and opened new markets to Finnish serial dramas like *Deadwind* and *Bordertown*<sup>5</sup>. The Finnish production companies are struggling to meet the demand because we don't have enough qualified TV writers<sup>6</sup>. That's why modern serial storytelling should be taught side by side with feature film writing at ELO.

### **FEWER AND BIGGER FEATURE FILMS**

---

In the past 5 years the feature film industry in the USA has focused on making big event films with franchise potential.<sup>7</sup> This trend can be seen in Finland, too. The number of films supported by the Finnish Film Foundation (SES) dropped by 10 % from 2013 to 2016 allowing SES to increase the amount of support for individual films.<sup>8</sup> The hit films are followed by hit sequels.

This has been good for the business: since the new policy the Finnish feature films have gained altogether 2–2,5 million viewers in the theaters each year, thanks to the 3–4 box office hits each year. Two categories dominate the most watched list of Finnish films: comedies and children's movies<sup>9</sup>. They're typically targeted to the Finnish audience and won't do that well internationally.

I welcome the domestic success of Finnish feature films, but believe we can do better. We should look past the "Hollywood formula" to our Nordic and European roots as filmmakers and challenge ourselves and each other to make better movies through creative collaboration<sup>10</sup>.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND APPS FOR FICTION**

---

Norwegian teen drama web series *Skam* became a major hit both in Norway and abroad. The series was told via various social media channels and videos released at NRK's website.<sup>11</sup> In Finland *#lovemilla* and *HasBeen* are great examples of successful transmedia storytelling.

YouTube has been a launch pad for up-and-coming filmmakers. Nörtti: Dragonslayer666 grew from YouTube to a book series and a webseries that drew its passionate fans (like my 8-year-old son) from YouTube to Yle Areena while using social media to connect with fans.<sup>12</sup>

Award winning director Steven Soderbergh and screenwriter Ed Solomon just tested new kind of interactive storytelling by creating a companion app for their serial drama Mosaic (released by HBO), that allows users to view the story of the series from each characters point of view<sup>13</sup>.

Social media allows filmmakers to interact and get direct feedback from their audience. It can also help screenwriters gain visibility for their work and create new and better career opportunities<sup>14</sup>. Social media and dedicated mobile apps can open up new, exciting ways to tell the stories. That's why we should explore their potential with excitement, not with distain or fear.

## **WRITING FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES**

---

Today most of the movies across the world are shot on digital cameras and distributed digitally. Moving to digital filmmaking has helped Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) to evolve to a level where it's often impossible to see the difference between "real" and CGI imagery. This allows the writers set stories in worlds that would have been too expensive to create without CGI.

The computer generated actors and immersive virtual reality<sup>15</sup> are the next steps of this evolution. Do screenwriters have any idea how these technologies can expand the range of stories that can be told? I believe all of us screenwriters should learn more about the emerging technologies and think about their potential – as well as their impact on our industry.

There are other trends changing our industry like the rise of Asian film industry, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and using blockchain for content access<sup>16</sup>, but I won't go to those on this document.

I believe that the future of film and television offers the greatest opportunities to the writers who are good at both feature film and serial storytelling, eager to test new ways to tell stories, embracing the emerging technologies and able to collaborate without losing their voice. If we want to create true game changers, all this should be taught and researched at ELO and Aalto.

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, A. 2018. *Storytelling Industries: Narrative Production in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>2</sup> Juvonen, A. 2018. Netflixin tilaajamäärä lähestyy Suomessa miljoonaa – Viaplay yrittää kimpittaa kilpailijaa urheilulla. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.kauppalehti.fi/uutiset/netflixin-tilaajamaara-lahestyy-suomessa-miljoonaa---viaplay-yrittaa-kimpittaa-kilpailijaa-urheilulla/WBdxXLNG>.

<sup>3</sup> Sandelius, N. 2018. TV:n katselu muuttuu: mitä TV:tä katsot ja millä laitteella? Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.apu.fi/artikkelit/tvn-katselu-muuttuu-mita-tvta-katsot-ja-milla-laitteella>.

<sup>4</sup> Nuutinen, H. 2016. Netflixin käyttöön vaikuttavat tekijät. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän Yliopisto.

<sup>5</sup> Vedenpää, V. 2018. Suomalaisarja Karppi myytiin maailmanlaajuisesti Netflixiin – "Suomi ei ole enää sarjojen takapajula". Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10331815>.

<sup>6</sup> Parkkinen, P. 2018. Suomalaisen tv-sarjojen nousukiito yltyy: "Meidät tullaan hakemaan kotoa, meille soitetaan, että olisiko mitään, näytäkää". Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10347690>.

<sup>7</sup> Fritz, B. 2018. *the Big Picture: The Fight for the Future of Movies*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

<sup>8</sup> The Finnish Film Foundation. 2017. *Elokuvavuosi 2016 Facts & Figures*. Helsinki: SES.

<sup>9</sup> Elokuvauutiset.fi. 2013– 2018. Vuosittilastot. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://elokuvauutiset.fi/site/sf-2011/vuosittilastot>

<sup>10</sup> Koljonen, J. 2018. *The Nostradamus Report*. Göteborg: Göteborg Film Festival.

<sup>11</sup> Sundet, V. 2018. From 'secret' online teen drama to international cult phenomenon: The global expansion of SKAM and its public service mission.

<sup>12</sup> Määttänen, J. 2017. Nuoret suomalaismiehet fanittavat 27-vuotiaan opiskelijan tekemää tv-sarjaa, vaikka sen ei pitänyt olla enää mahdollista – Näin ärsyttävästä nörtistä tuli nettisuosikki. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.hs.fi/nyt/art-2000005415017.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Newton, C. 2017. Steven Soderbergh's free interactive TV series 'Mosaic' turns viewers into filmmakers. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.theverge.com/2017/11/8/16621468/steven-soderbergh-mosaic-hbo-app-download>.

<sup>14</sup> Grove, E. 2017. *Social Media Basics For Filmmakers: A Simple Guide*. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.raindance.org/social-media-basics-filmmakers-guide/>

<sup>15</sup> Powell, W., Garner, T., Shapiro, S., Paul, B. 2017. *Virtual Reality In Entertainment*. The State Of The Industry. London: Bafta.

<sup>16</sup> Dhillion, S. 2018. How Blockchain Can Transform The Future of Entertainment. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/valleyvoices/2018/02/01/how-blockchain-can-transform-the-future-of-entertainment/#5ec012ca6b6b>.