Where Are We Headed? The Future of Streaming and the Digital Age

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> *"We live in a streaming world where everything, inevitably, will be available like running water–all you have to do is pay the utility bill."[1]*

We live in a digital age, where change is happening constantly in TV, video, music, and news media. Streaming technology is progressing allowing viewers to instantly stream on televisions, computers, and Smartphones; however, DVDs, newspaper, film, cable, and landlines will soon become obsolete. Similarly, the ways in which we communicate with one another, socialize, disseminate information have been revolutionized. *Streaming: Movies, Media, and Instant Access ("Streaming"),* authored by Wheeler Winston Dixon, illuminates the challenges of preserving films in the digital age, and examines the consequences of the transition to digital on contemporary filmmaking and culture. In particular, Dixon predicts a world that traditional movie films will vanish and all movies will be shot digitally. In addition, *Streaming* suggests DVDs will cease to exist as all films will be streamed, and those worth keeping, will be collected in the cloud and accessed through services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Instant. Overall, this book provides insight and guidance on the Internet dominance in filmmaking and our culture.

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[1] *See* WHEELER WINSTON DIXON, STREAMING: MOVIES, MEDIA, AND INSTANT ACCESS 28 (University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

Wheeler Winston Dixon is the James Ryan Professor of Film Studies, Coordinator of the Film Studies, and Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He also serves as the co-editor of the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, and is regarded as a top reviewer of films. Dixon is an internationally recognized filmmaker, scholar, and expert on film history, theory and criticism. He is the author of thirty books and more than 100 articles.[2] Some of his books include: *Cinema at The Margins (2013), Death of the Moguls: The End of Classical Hollywood* (2012), and *A History of Horror* (2010).[3] In addition to his academic and professional work, he is the prominent blogger for his own site, Frame by Frame.

Streaming is an opinionated and detailed examination on the current state of the moving-image media as they experience a rapid transition to the future of viewing. The book begins by offering an overview of the history of digital film production and its impact on tradition filmmaking. However, besides providing a historical map of the development of digitized filmmaking, Dixon also examines the social cultural and psychological impact on viewers. Later in the book, Dixon explores the ways in which the Hollywood model of embracing digital production is spreading rapidly throughout the country and world.

The first chapter provides a general overview of the entire book, specifically focusing on the shift to digital cinema. According to Dixon, "[i]t is an inescapable fact that we will soon experience a complete changeover to digital formatting, eschewing film entirely."[4] Moreover, Dixon gives a broad overview on the concept of streaming, and describes how early televisions shows were streaming unprocessed videos. Comparing a 1958 television talk show with current

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[2] *See* Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Streaming: Movies, Media, and Instant Access on "Inquiry" with Mark Lynch*, FRAME BY FRAME (Aug. 1, 2013), *archived at* http://perma.cc/5E7W-CR88 (pointing out the numerous written works produced by Wheeler Winston Dixon).
[3] *See id.*
[4] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 9.

programming, Dixon emphasizes that in today's society "[r]eal intellectual exchanges have been

forgotten", rather talk shows have degenerated into shouting matches available only to guests

that have either a new movie, book, or website.[5] Ultimately, Dixon focuses the reader's attention

on today's choices between streaming and hard copy technology. In essence, he argues that

Netflix killed Blockbuster's "'go to the store' model, just as Amazon did with books, thus

wiping out many independent bookstores."[6] Dixon indicates that Netflix streaming-only service

to viewers was intended to wipe out DVDs altogether, but questions what implications would

this cause on all the classic films that are not available as streaming video. In short, Dixon

highlights that they will cease to exist, partially because they are not popular enough.

Immediately in the second chapter, Dixon focuses on Hollywood's model of embracing

digital productions. For instance, 20th Century Fox endorsed the digital changeover and

announced they "will adopt the digital format as the only format in which it will theatrically

distribute films."[7] Suggesting, that theaters that do not convert to digital formatting will have no

products to run, except for older films. Therefore, theaters would be given the option to either

adopt the demands of new technology or get out of business.[8] Consequently, *Streaming*

recognizes that what is driving the entire process with cinema is money.

The third chapter explains that streaming accelerates everything, and therefore, there is a

higher demand for new content. Dixon contends that authors, singers, publishers are working

double shifts because of the push for more materials to hold consumers, readers, audiences.

According to *Streaming*, televisions shows are rushed online hours after they are originally

broadcast, movies are offered on-demand before they have left theaters, and producing one book

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[5] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 11.
[6] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 10.
[7] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 36.
[8] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 36.

a year is now just not enough. Therefore, acknowledging that in the new digital age, providing content for viewers is fundamentally important because the majority of viewers constantly want what is new.

Chapter four focuses on social media, gaming, and instant access. Immediately in the first paragraph, Dixon stresses the importance to remember, "there is a life apart from virtual existence, a real world where we possess corporeal existence."[9] Moreover, *Streaming* proclaims the risk of early death due to excessive television exposure, especially with services like Netflix, Hulu, and other web content providers.[10] Further, *Streaming* goes on to discuss the growth of cord-cutter and new technological services such as, Siri and facial recognition systems.

In chapter five, *Streaming* discusses Google Glass and other surveillance technologies that are changing our behavior, culture, and font of information. Immediately, Dixon pronounces that Google glass will be a source of information for Google and wearer of the glasses, but also a target of stream ads based on the users information.[11] Further, *Streaming* discusses other surveillance technologies, including a television that watches you and then transmits data about your viewings to advertisers and programming executives. Dixon ends the book stating that the future is a streaming world.

Streaming is a very interest book that touches upon every aspect of the shift to digital production. The substantive content is both engaging and interesting, without being too technical or complex. At fewer than 200 pages, readers will gain from the book a better understanding of the transition to digital formatting and explore what stands to be lost with the emergence of streaming. *Streaming* explores extensively the way in which digital cinema has altered

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[9] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 90.
[10] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 90.
[11] *See* Dixon, *supra* note 1, at 114.

contemporary filmmaking; however, it lacks the same examination in regards to music, books and gaming. In addition, *Streaming* discusses the way in which the Hollywood model of digital reproduction is spreading around the world. Nonetheless, opinionating that theater will cease to exist if they do not embrace the digital formatting used by Hollywood.

The book explores extensively the way in which digital cinema has altered contemporary filmmaking. Therefore, this book will appeal to readers interested in the film industry, as it is primary discussed throughout the entire book. A reader might find that the chapters become repetitive in regards to film, but it lacks more study in regards to music, books, and gaming. For instance, chapter four only briefly and sparingly examines how the new digital world impacts gaming, social media and culture, through surveillance devices and facial recognition systems. This only means, that this is a book that is best suited for people, who want a more cohesive examination on how the switch to digital will change the habits of viewers, film industry, digital production and distribution. For the foregoing reasons, I would recommend this book for purchase, as it is an educational study for any who is interesting in the development of the new digital world.