

Call for Papers: *Mystery Science Theater* and the Culture of Riffing/the Mash-Up  
SWPACA 2016: Southwest Popular Culture and American Culture Association  
<http://southwestpca.org/>

Make plans to join the Southwest PCA/ACA for our 37th annual conference, February 10-13<sup>th</sup> 2016, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Conference Center in beautiful Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Area chair seeks papers/presentations on *Mystery Science Theater* and the culture of riffing and mash-up.

Please submit your paper title and 100- to 300-word abstract by November 1, 2015, through our database, which can be accessed at: <http://conference2016.southwestpca.org>

Please note there are monetary awards for the best graduate student papers in a variety of categories. See <http://southwestpca.org/conference/graduate-student-awards>

The organization also has a new open access peer reviewed journal that encourages you to submit your work. See: *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy* at <http://journaldialogue.org/>

### **The subject area:**

In the fall of 1988 on a small public access channel, KTMA, in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area of Minnesota, a bizarre show appeared. It featured two hand-made, robot-appearing puppets and a man watching a movie and making comments to the screen. Little did its creator, Joel Hodgson, know that he had created a worldwide popular culture phenomenon known as *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (MST). The show lasted 10 seasons and spawned a theatrical feature film.

Now riffing movies, television, cartoons, and the rise of the mash-up have become very popular modes of expression. Twenty-three years after its cancellation, *Mystery Science Theater* is more popular than ever. The former cast members, through Rifftrax and Cinematic Titanic, continue to make audiences laugh and garner new fans.

Some topics that could be discussed and some questions that might be answered include:

Pre-MST3K “riffing” like *Mad Movies* and the LA Connection.

Zombies and riffing (a good topic in light of the popularity of zombie studies)

iRiffs and the rise of personalized riffing by “amateurs”

Other fan riffing groups and individuals like Master Pancake Theater, Incognito Cinema Warriors, Josh Way, Laughterpiece Theater, etc.

Pre-MST3K riffing

*Speaking of Animals*

*Fractured Flickers*

*Freaks and Geeks* MST3K connection

Fan Culture and MST: The Misties (who are they and why)?

The original Sci Fi MST Game

Gender roles, women and MST  
Frank Zappa and MST  
Superhero movies (why are they so ripe for riffing)  
Monty Python and MST  
Comics and MST3K  
Shakespeare and riffing  
The remix of the movie trailer  
The rise of “forgotten movies” that were used on MST  
The rise of B-movie popularity as a result of being on MST  
Christmas movies and MST  
The pre-MST comedy careers of the cast members  
The KTMA years compared to the Comedy Central years compared to the SciFi Channel years.  
Movies that deserve the MST treatment but never received it  
Mental Hygiene films and MST  
The legal battle between Best Brains and Mr. Sinus Theatre (the roots and causes of this)  
What were/are the cultural implications of the original invention exchanges in those early episodes of show?  
What are the differences in the styles of Mike Nelson and Joel Hodgson as hosts for the show?  
The theatrical feature film attempt, *MST 3000 The Movie* (trials and tribulations of getting director Jim Mallon’s big budget version of MST to the screen)  
Jim Mallon’s genius as producer/director/character  
Modern companies such as Laugh Tracks and MST’s influence on them  
The differences of Tom Servo and Crow (difference in style and tone)  
Actor Joe Don Baker and MST — a perfect marriage  
Spy movies and MST  
Monsters and MST  
Attempts at creating continuity within the “host segments” — what worked and what didn’t (the difference in continuity between Comedy Central episodes and Sc Fi channel shows)  
Cast characters (e.g., Mad Scientists, Evil Mothers, and weird aliens)  
The hardcore statistical analysis found on websites by dedicated fans (e.g., riffs per show and other weird statistical data — reasons for these weird statistical things)  
MST and the Web — how did the Internet help create such a rabid following?  
Popular music and MST  
Mary Jo Pehl, Bridgett Nelson, and the influence of women writers on MST  
MST fan culture and university culture  
The MST influence on the show *Freaks and Geeks*  
TV’s Frank and MST and Frank Coniff’s role in *America’s Funniest Home Videos*  
A look at the influence of music on MST (one could hear a reference to an obscure British band like Hawkwind on the same show as one that might mention a household artist like Britney Spears or Johnny Cash, for example)  
Bill Corbett as a playwright and performer  
MST and Tape Trading Culture (Keep circulating the tapes, some of the MST episodes admonished the fans)  
The lost episodes of MST: The Green Slime, Thunderbirds etc. Where are they? What were they like? Will we ever see them?

Crow, Tom Servo and the bots in Popular Culture: Non-MST appearances (which continue to this day)

MST and the First Amendment to the Constitution: Why did the show always thank the authors of the First Amendment? How did the show use it? Did it push boundaries constitutionally?

KTMA and MST: Just how could a show like this get on cable access television in the first place? How did it become a movement? Were there glimpses of the greater things to come in those earlier episodes or not?

Torgo and Ortega: Cult Figures and MST — why so popular with fans?

The worse a movie is, the funnier and better an episode of MST: Why is that?

Paul Chaplin, unsung writer on MST

The MST writers were, and continue to be, masters of Popular Culture in all its forms (film, music, politics, etc.)

Movie references and MST — cultural and historical implications

MST terms and the vernacular (e.g., “Movie Sign”, “Poopie”, “Huzzah”) and their adaptation into everyday language

What was Josh Weinstein’s role in those early MST episodes and his post MST career as producer?

Proposals on these and other relevant presentation topics will be considered.

Submission Deadline: 11/1/15

37th Annual Conference, Southwest Popular/American Culture Association, Feb 10-13 2016

Conference Hotel:

Hyatt Regency Albuquerque

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For more information on the area, please contact:

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