



# **“Going to the Show”**

## **Representing the Spatiality of Film History**

**A public lecture by Professor Robert C. Allen, University of North Carolina, presented by the ARC Cultural Research Network and the Centre for Media History, Macquarie University**

**WHEN: 5.30 FOR 6PM, Thursday, 13 March 2008**

**WHERE: Friends Room, Mitchell Wing, State Library of NSW, Macquarie St, Sydney**

**FREE: but RSVPs essential by 6 March**

**RSVP: Beth Herbert at [bethwa@hotmail.com](mailto:bethwa@hotmail.com)**



**CENTRE FOR MEDIA HISTORY**



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## Representing the Spatiality of Film History

### ABSTRACT

For more than thirty years, Robert Allen has explored the histories of and relationships among popular entertainment forms in America: cinema, vaudeville, burlesque, radio, and television. Of particular concern for him have been issues of exhibition, audience, and reception. In an essay published in 1999, he argued that a decade before the U.S. had entered a “post-Hollywood” era, in which the products, technologies, experiences, audiences, and locales associated with “cinema” were profoundly different from those assumed by most in the field of cinema studies.

In this lecture, Professor Allen amplifies this argument and extends its implications back across the entire history of cinema in the U.S. With many more people today watching movies on DVD players than in movie theatres, we can now see the outlines of the epoch of cinema based upon norms of public moviegoing (1895-1990). He argues that the defining features of this epoch were the sociality and spatiality of the experience of cinema. Allen explores how these crucial features of U.S. film history might be theorized, documented, and represented through his own work on the history of the social experience of moviegoing in the American South. He will also demonstrate how historic maps and new technologies of spatial representation might be used to help us “see” the role movies and moviegoing played in cities and towns in the South during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### BIOGRAPHY

Robert C. Allen is James Logan Godfrey Distinguished Professor of American Studies, History, and Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author, co-author, editor, or co-editor of nine books, including **Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture** (1992), **Speaking of Soap Operas** (1985), **Film History: Theory and Practice** (with Douglas Gomery) (1985), two editions of **Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism** (1987/1992), and **The Television Studies Reader** (co-edited with Annette Hill) (2004). He has served as a visiting professor at the Univ. of Bergen, Univ. of Amsterdam, Middlesex Univ., and the Univ. of Shanghai, and as a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Univ. of Sydney. He has held research fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Humanities Center (US).

He is currently working with colleagues at the Univ. of North Carolina's Wilson Library on “Going to the Show,” an online digital library initiative documenting and representing the emergence of movie culture in North Carolina, funded through the U.S. Library Science and Technology Act. In December 2007, he was one of 7 scholars in the U.S. awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Fellowship.