

Genre-Crossing and pop cosmopolitanism? Passions and Bollywood

Written by Sam Ford

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This piece originally appeared on Feb. 6, 2006, on the Convergence Culture Consortium from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Sam Ford blogs weekly there about soap operas in relation to fan cultures and innovative storytelling and marketing campaigns, in addition to blogging about many other new media issues updated multiple times daily. You can visit his blog [here](#).

Recently, [the NBC soap Passions](#) had a sequence that was done in [Bollywood style](#). Passions is known as the fantasy soap, a show that is self-referential, a parody of sorts of some of soap opera's conventions, and the most popular soap amongst younger viewers, particularly teenagers. It revels in its excess, but it can hardly be lumped in the same boat as some of the cheesy-but-don't-openly-know-it soaps and more serious and well-acted soaps, like [As the World Turns](#). (Is my bias showing again?)

I found the show to be a good example of [what our fearless leader Henry Jenkins calls pop cosmopolitanism](#) --(the link will take you to a splendid audio interview with Henry on [Forbes](#) about the concept). Basically, people are learning more about the world and being "cosmopolitans" today through popular culture--And what better example than a Bollywood-influenced sequence making its way into an American soap opera?

Bollywood and Passions is a perfect fit--They are both campy, celebratory of excess, and require the viewer to lower their expectations of realism. And, not surprisingly, the episode was a major success in that it garnered a lot of press for the show and a lot of feedback from the audience. NBC's daytime site has even devoted [a section particularly about the Bollywood sequence](#). You can watch the Bollywood sequence, read reaction, backstage interviews, view photographs, etc.

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Some of you all may remember [a post I made a couple of months ago](#) about a Passions episode that featured an animation sequence as well. At the time, I mentioned that the show is a great example of genre-mixing being very successful as well. By incorporating an international influence in this latest experiment,

Passions

is showing not only the value of mixing genres but also by mixing cultures in new and innovative ways.

If some of you all have the time, check out the Passions Bollywood site and let me know what you think...