

Genre and Youth-Produced Film and Video

What is Genre?

Genre refers to a type or style of movie. Familiar examples include: science fiction, drama, film noir, documentary, musicals, westerns, martial arts. In most films, there are certain narrative elements that can be used to identify genre. These include typical plot lines, characters, body language, dress, dialogue, settings, objects, and style or “look” (i.e. lighting and camera movement). Genres both create a structure or format for a filmmaker to follow in shaping the development of a film, and create a set of expectations for the audience about what a movie will be like and how a story will develop.

Straightforward replication of Hollywood genres in youth-produced film can be problematic if young actors are trying to convincingly portray characters such as hardened detectives or combat heroes. However, genre can be adapted to youth-produced film by making the stories about the experiences of people the ages of the actors, or by using the conventions of a genre to comedic effect. Some examples of the latter are *Closet Carnivore*, a musical comedy about a young man who hides his love of meat from his vegan parents, or *Out of Inc.*, a mystery using exaggerated conventions of a film noir detective story.

Non-Fiction Youth-Produced Film and Video

Two formats that lend themselves particularly well to youth-produced film are documentary and public service announcement (PSA). Both formats allow filmmakers to tell stories that are important and meaningful to them from their own perspective. There are also funding and screening opportunities for youth-produced work with themes related to social justice, environmental stewardship, global issues, and health and safety. This gives youth a means of having a voice in issues that are the subject of public debate and a document to present to government, other decisions-making bodies, and their peers.