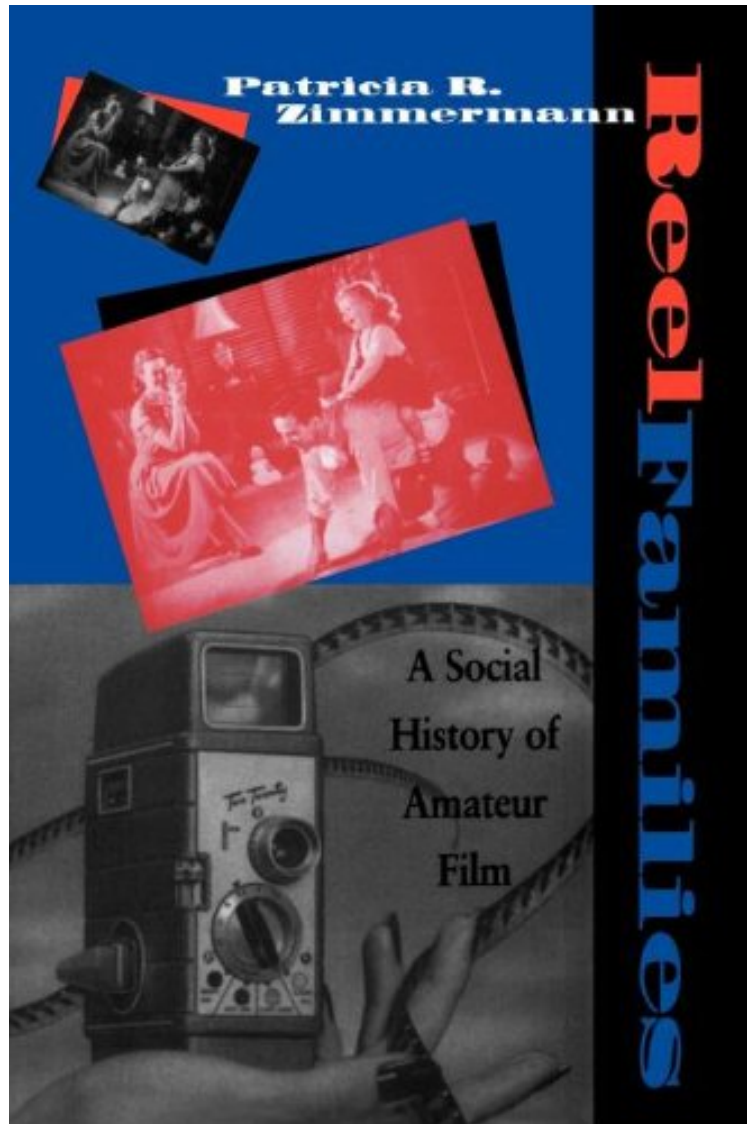


[DOWNLOAD] Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Arts and Politics of the Everyday)

## Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Arts and Politics of the Everyday)

Patricia R. Zimmermann

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#1534309 in Books Patricia R Zimmerman 1995-07-22 1995-07-22 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.25 x .61 x 6.12l, .81 #File Name: 0253209447208 pages Reel Families | File size: 42.Mb

**Patricia R. Zimmermann : Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Arts and Politics of the Everyday)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Arts and Politics of the Everyday):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fractured History By Michael W. Cleveland I hesitate to take this on, partly because it involves taking issue with one of the accepted authorities in the field, and partly because the work

Ms. Zimmermann put into her research was sincere. Because I know first hand the difficulty involved in this research and the obscurity of much of the material, I don't wish to offend her or belittle her efforts, and I fear that impression is inevitable in what I have to say about this. After 20 years of research and with all due respect: The main premise of the book is interesting, but one must read the historical background she provides with a grain of salt, because it is largely wrong. She never quite comes to a real understanding of the nature of the early history of amateur film, especially after the introduction of the 16mm format. For example, she states: "The very design of 16mm gauge and cameras insured that their use would be confined, at least until World War II, to family leisure activities." Yet the original Cine-Kodak was produced specifically with the expectation that the people using it would want to make scripted films, and many did. Kodak's whole marketing effort went to elaborate lengths to encourage that end by producing sample scripts and offering much advice on how to produce these films effectively. The first 16mm camera was a scaled down copy of the larger box-like professional 35mm studio cameras of the day. When simpler cameras were added to Kodak's line, there was no cynicism in rebilling this original box as a camera for the "advanced amateur." Both local clubs and national groups like the Amateur Cine League (in which Kodak was a silent partner) were formed to encourage and recognize the production of high-quality scripted amateur work. The actual use of the cameras ranged, as would be expected, through the spectrum of subjects from family portraits, often of people standing around looking awkward or waving at the camera, to very high quality cinematic story-telling. One of the best of these, a film called "Fly Low Jack and the Game" was produced by a Rochester amateur theater group (albeit with some direct under-the-counter help from Kodak, who provided the film and processing) entirely with simple Cine Kodak Model B cameras. There was nothing in the design of either format or equipment that restricted use to family leisure activities, but it should also be noted that the format was never designed for theatrical presentation; it was intended for non-theatrical uses, a fact that Ms. Zimmermann often seems to forget in her efforts to expose otherwise non-existent obstacles to theatrical exploitation of amateur formats. She says: "In 1921, Eastman Kodak and Bell and Howell...colluded to standardize amateur-film width at 16mm to discourage amateurs from splitting the standard 35mm film into two strips of 17.5mm stock." I have not been able to locate her source, but this long-standing myth is incorrect. By 1921, the format standard for 16mm film had been set for some time, long before Bell Howell were ever invited to see the system. It came about through a series of experiments by John Capstaff at Kodak that determined the minimum image size for optimum projection of the finer grained reversal image. He settled on a 10mm wide format, with 3mm added to each side for sprocket holes to make a total width of 16mm. This was done by 1916 according to company records (though the experiments may have been repeated in 1919 after a development hiatus brought about by WWI), and the first prototype Cine-Kodak was completed in May 1920. The format was established by the time Bell Howell were invited into the fold. There was no such collusion, and the fact that 16mm film was smaller than the split 35mm film was merely a convenient, though welcome side effect. She states that "This reversal process, which remains the standard for amateur and semiprofessional films today, embodied contradictory effects. While reversal film slashed costs, it was impossible to make prints with it except by very expensive and complicated procedures. This lack of reproducibility cut off distribution and exhibition channels...." This is simply not true. A finished duplicate film could be acquired at the same cost as the original unexposed roll of 16mm reversal film of equal length. It was no more difficult to make than any positive print from a negative, and we are presented with another of those non-existent obstacles. She states that "Victor's first 16mm camera closely resembled the design and proportions of the Bell Howell Filmo." Not so. Victor's fourth camera, the Victor Model 3, was a copy externally of the Filmo design, but that was not until 1927. His first camera, which followed a few weeks after the Cine-Kodak in 1923, was a simple rectangular box, more similar to the Cine-Kodak than the Filmo. The next two models were variations on that box form. She goes on to state that "These similarities suggest the difficulty of pinpointing which firm actually originated the 16mm design." Presumably she is referring to that shared appearance, which was originated by Bell Howell in 1923, and copied by Victor in 1927. No difficulty at all. And one last example: She states [specifically with reference to movie equipment] that "Unlike Victor Animatograph, Kodak did not widely engage in distribution, industrial uses, or camera manufacturing." In fact, Kodak was THE major manufacturer and distributor of amateur movie equipment from mid-1923 when they introduced the 16mm format, throughout the 1920's and 30's. It's true that Kodak produced equipment to create a market for it's films, but the company was a prolific producer. It is also true that Kodak invited Victor and Bell Howell to produce 16mm equipment, in part to add to that film market, but also to create a degree of credibility for a brand new film format by making it more than just a Kodak project. Victor's total output of cameras from 1923 through the remainder of the life of the company (to about 1950) was smaller than the output of just one Kodak model, the Cine-Kodak Model B made from 1925 until 1931, and Kodak exceeded Bell Howell's output at least through the 1920's, and probably a good part of the 1930's. Victor was a small, if very vocal player in an industry created and dominated by Kodak, with Bell Howell tagging along for the ride for many years. This is only a sampling of the degree of error and misunderstanding. In some places there are such errors in every paragraph of the historical accounts. It is a book well worth reading, but toward the broader premises and objectives of the book, any conclusions drawn based on the history she presents are subject to question because the history is so far off the mark.

3 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Non-fiction film theory at its best!!! By A Customer Dr. Zimmermann is the leading expert of amateur film theory in the

ENTIRE WORLD. Pretty impressive, huh? I would rank this among the 25 most important books a film student needs to read before graduating college. You go Patruska!!!

Amateur film has been seen as the junkheap of private culture. Yet music videos recycle home movies as authenticity; commercials copy its style to sell intimacy; documentaries use it to recount history "from below." *Reel Families* is the first historical study of amateur film, the most pervasive of media. Patricia Zimmerman charts the history of this medium from 1897 to the present, examining how ideological, technical, and social constraints have stunted amateur film's potential for extending media production beyond corporate monopolies and into the hands of everyday people. She draws on an array of sources: camera manufacturers, patents, early film and photography technology journals, amateur filmmaking magazines, professional magazines, and family-oriented popular magazines to investigate how the concept of amateur film was transformed within evolving contexts of technology, aesthetics, social relations, and politics.

From the Back Cover *Reel Families* is the first historical study of amateur film. This pervasive medium is often considered the junkheap of private culture, yet music videos recycle home movies as authenticity; commercials copy their style to sell intimacy; documentaries use them to recount history 'from below'---of civil rights, feminism, and the ravages of the Holocaust and Vietnam. About the Author PATRICIA R. ZIMMERMANN is Professor in the Department of Cinema and Photography at Ithaca College. She is also the author of *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* and has also published articles in *Screen*, *Afterimage*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Cinema Journal*, *The Independent*, *Genders*, *Wide Angle*, and *Current Research in Film*.