**Journeys Across Media 2016 PG conference**

**Abstract:**

**Analysing Adaptation within Industrial Contexts: The Coen Brothers Post-2000**

My paper takes the post-2000s work of the Coen Brothers to analyse adaptation within industrial contexts. Beginning in the early 2000s, with *Intolerable Cruelty* (2003) and *The Ladykillers* (2004), the Coens were seen by the popular press to be adopting new working practices whereby – for the first time – the Brothers were directing films based on other people’s original sources. As a result, the Coens were perceived to be engaging in standard Hollywood practices, including the ‘recycling’ of content leading to ‘cycles’ like remakes, and were scrutinised for working as ‘directors-for-hire’, leading multiple commentators to question the Coens’ ‘independent’ status.

After *Intolerable Cruelty* and *The Ladykillers*, however, the Coens would begin a collaboration with producer Scott Rudin, including work on two direct adaptations *No Country for Old Men* (2007) and *True Grit* (2010). *No Country*, in particular, was regarded by critics as ‘a return to form’, then after the release of *True Grit* one reviewer would state that the Coens ‘are probably the greatest literary adapters we have at the moment’ (Simon, 21/12/2010:C1). *No Country* and *True Grit* were received much more fondly by critics, with attention and praise especially directed towards what was perceived as a natural and creative pairing between the Coens and the authors of the original novels, Cormac McCarthy and Charles Portis, respectively.

My paper, however, scrutinises critical notions that the Coens were ‘going mainstream’ with their work on *Intolerable Cruelty*, by tracing their practice of adaptation back to before their debut film, *Blood Simple* (1985). Conversely, my paper assesses *No Country*’s economic, production, and distribution backgrounds to challenge notions of the work as ‘art’, which rely on suggestions that the film was in some way removed from the industrial practices with which *Intolerable Cruelty* and *The Ladykillers* were implicated.

In order to conduct the investigation, I analyse extra-textual discourses including promotional materials, critical responses, and statements by industry practitioners. I consider how and why film adaptations are promoted and received as art or commercial industry practice, and, in so doing, complicate simple binary notions of creativity vs commerciality. By focusing on the Coens as ‘independent’ filmmakers, and their collaboration with producers Brian Grazer on *Intolerable Cruelty* and Rudin on *No Country* and *True Grit*, my paper investigates the implications of understanding adaptation within industrial contexts, and analyses the effect that this can have on notions surrounding authorship of the text.

**Author Bio**

Andrew Stubbs is visiting lecturer of Film and Media at Staffordshire University, UK, where he is module leader of American and International Cinema, Blockbuster Film, and Film Analysis. He is currently completing a PhD at Edge Hill University on screen authorship in American media industry contexts in an era of media convergence.