

Editorial Note, JMI, 6

This issue collects the papers from our November, 2006 conference on 'Sound Cultures in Indian Cinema'. The conference was held with the intention of launching an Indian film sound research programme in the Department of Film Studies, and with the hope of motivating similar programmes in other institutions in the country. Many such conferences since the landmark Yale French Studies event held in 1980 must have begun with an observation on the silence that sound constitutes in Film Studies; ours was no exception. There was, however, no great anxiety about possible destabilization of the critical categories that exist at hand, as will be evident from the essays here. On the contrary, the scholars seemed to be more interested in staging an encounter between the familiar conceptualizations on Indian cinema and the questions that sound brings into play regarding the Indian film form.

[Ashish Rajadhyaksha](#) and [Madhava Prasad](#), regular contributors to our annual conferences, extend some of their earlier arguments into the domain of sound so that the problems arising from recording, voice, speech and music both complicate and clarify the ways these theorists have so far understood the phenomenon of Indian cinema. We begin the volume with Rajadhyaksha's essay because of its more general theoretical scope. [Madhuja Mukherjee](#) and [Amlan Das Gupta](#) concentrate on performance and music, elements that have a central function in the aural and visual organization of Indian films, and that have been themselves shaped in public life through films. Mukherjee's essay and [mine](#) try to locate a historical dynamics of the use of sound, an attempt that also underlines the contributions of Rajadhyaksha and Prasad. [Anindya Sengupta](#)'s paper takes a different route from the others in the sense that it is an attempt at using the axis of sound to shape an authorship study. The two student papers by [Budhaditya Chattopadhyay](#) and [Shubham Roy Choudhury](#) touch on two diverging aspects - technical compulsions and generic habits of Indian film.

We are glad to publish an important essay by [Supriya Chaudhuri](#) on an aspect of Satyajit Ray as yet un-discussed in the large literature on the director. This comes from outside the conference as a Special Feature at the end.

Since the conference the Department has launched a Media Lab as a space for research and training in the emerging forms of the audio-visual media. Research and short training workshops on Indian film sound constitute an important part of the Media Lab initiative. More material on sound should come out once the Lab gathers momentum.

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