

Student's Name

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Course #

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Hollywood to Bollywood: What makes a movie good?

In the past decade, the price of going to the movies has skyrocketed! At the close of 2012, average ticket prices had topped \$8 a person (Lieberman). Unfortunately, this average is somewhat skewed by discount deals; the actual cost per ticket for a first run movie during peak hours is more like \$10 to \$12 dollars – more for 3-D. Armed with these startling figures, when I set out to see a movie, I want to make sure that I am going to get the best deal for my money, but how can I determine if the film is worth the price? What makes a movie good?

Ask ten people this question, and you will get ten different answers. Good directing, believable acting, and a good script top many people's list; however, it isn't always as easy as that. Critics have a lot of influence over what's hot and what's not, but even movie experts can't agree on what makes a box office hit. It has become an urban legend how advertising executives of Mars Candy passed on using their M&M candies in a movie from a relatively unknown writer/director. *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* became not only a box office smash, but one of the most loved films of a generation. Even George Lucas had trouble selling his ideas to studio heads! But this really doesn't answer the question of why *Star Wars* is now a multi-billion dollar franchise while others movies are doomed to obscurity.

Today's popular movies like *Avatar* and *The Lord of the Rings* are increasingly driven by sophisticated computer graphics. Since the mid-70's, studios have raced to see who could come

up with the most outstanding special effects. “You’ll really believe a man can fly” was the tag-line from 1978’s *Superman*. *Forest Gump* pushed the bounds of believability by putting an actor into an historic piece of footage. It really looked like he was shaking hands with a dead president! But what if special effects are not your thing? The question still lingers of what brings people out to the movies?

One of the first places many people turn for a recommendation is their friends. Unfortunately, my best friend is a horror film fanatic, but I refuse to even watch. My preference is for movies that have been based on a book, and it is fun to see just how closely the director’s vision comes to my own interpretation of the scenes and characters. To me there is nothing more disappointing as seeing a novel-based movie and having it appear nothing like I had pictured. Likewise, I don’t like movies that change major elements between the book and the movie. A notable exception was the ending of *The Horse Whisperer*. For once, I liked the ending of the movie better than the book, and for several reasons: the male lead doesn’t sleep with the leading lady, she doesn’t leave her husband, and everyone lives to the end of the movie! In my mind at least, Redford created a superior character with these changes.

When asked the question “What makes a good movie?”, other people’s answers included rising and falling action, intriguing story lines, unique plots, and movies that didn’t just drag on (Yahoo! Answers). Not every movie is going to appeal to everyone. I know I am no judge of a good movie – I fell asleep in *Chariots of Fire*. Even a movie with a favorite actor is no guarantee that I will like it. I usually like John Travolta movies, but I left *Pulp Fiction* with the thought, “That’s two hours of my life I won’t be able to get back!” Perhaps good movies, like beauty, are in the eye of the beholder.

Works Cited

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