

## Critic's Notebook: What to Look for at the Movies (Adaptable for Theater)

### Basics

- Name of film
- Genre
- Connection with current events or trends? Is this a timely film?
- Running time (Too long? Too short?)
- Rating (G, PG, PG-13, PG-17, R, etc.)? Did the rating match the content? Why or why not?
- Plot (Usually spend just a few sentences on this and move on to *how* the plot was relayed – and don't give away the ending!)

### Producing the film

- Who wrote the script? Who bought it? What changes were needed before it was filmed?
- What kind of budgeting issues affected the production?
- What role did the producer play in getting the film to the screen?

### Directing/editing

- Name of director
- Other recent work?
- Distinctive style?
- Pacing (Does the director keep the story moving? Dragging?)
- Unusual camera movements? Creative shots/angles? To what end?
- Transition style (What is it? Dissolve? Jump cut? Fade-out? Is it effective?)
- Does symbolism reinforce themes?
- Impressive scenes, sounds or visual effects? Any that serve as distractions or work poorly?
- Give special attention to opening and closing scenes.

### Script

- Dialogue (Snappy? Sophisticated? Strained?)
- Note particularly effective or ineffective bits of dialogue.

### Acting

- Names of lead actors
- Other recent work
- Convincing portrayals?
- What actions were most effective or ineffective?
- Names of supporting actors
- Any standout performances?
- Interesting cameos?

### Setting, costumes, makeup

- Describe the most notable elements.
- Did they make it easier or more difficult for you to suspend your disbelief?

### Summary judgment

- Did the film exceed or fail to live up to expectations?
- Was it entertaining? Worth the price of admission? (Ask yourself this question, but don't use it. At all costs, avoid all variations of "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll kiss 10 bucks goodbye.")

**Note:** Do not use this form as an outline for a review. It's merely a list of things to look for in a film. Select the most interesting, and focus your review on those aspects.