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## Public taste: A comparison of movie popularity and critical opinion

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PUBLIC TASTE: A COMPARISON OF MOVIE  
POPULARITY AND CRITICAL OPINION

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

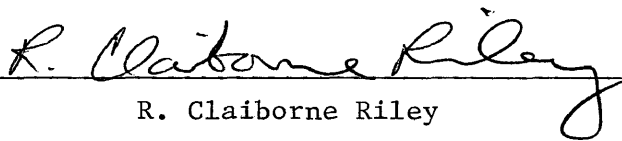
R. Claiborne Riley

1982


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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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Approved, September 1982

  
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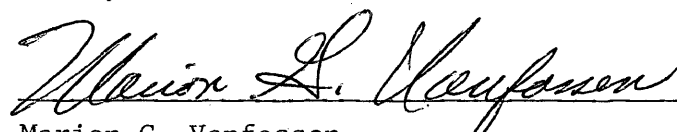
  
Marion G. Vanfossen

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between public response to current films and professional film reviews as a means of assessing the thesis that sophistication of the movie-going public is reflected by their appreciation of film quality. A film's earned rental amount (monies paid to film distributors by film exhibitors) is used as a measure of popularity or public acceptance. A cumulative film score compiled from several film reviews written by professional film critics is used as a measure of film quality. In addition, the effects of the Motion Picture Association of American film ratings (G, PG, R), the types of film, and the months of release are explored in connection with public popularity and with critical opinion.

The relationship between public acceptance of a film and the critical rating of the film was found to be direct and moderate with a greater degree of agreement at the upper end of the joint distributions than at the lower end. The public tends to accept science fiction films and comedies most favorably, while the critics prefer dramas, musicals, and war movies. From these preferences, it is speculated that the public continues to seek an "escape" in their movie entertainment, while critics lean toward reality films. It should be noted that the overall preferences of each group (public and critic) are placed in the mid-range area on the preference scale of the other.

Both the public and the critics show a preference for films with lesser amounts of nudity, violence, sex, and profanity. That is, G-rated movies tend to be preferred to PG-rated films and PG-rated films tend to be preferred to R-rated movies. The relative scarcity of G-rated films may introduce a preferential bias in their favor.

The most popular films tend to be released in the summer months and around Christmas. The greater amounts of potential free time for the public these months increases the likelihood of movie attendance. In addition, the movie industry gears the distribution of their best movies around these months. The month of release has little or no effect on critical opinion.

The moderate agreement found between public acceptance and critical opinion does not test the "sophistication" thesis directly. Future research of a longitudinal nature along socioeconomic and educational lines would appear to be necessary.

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PUBLIC TASTE: A COMPARISON OF MOVIE  
POPULARITY AND CRITICAL OPINION



## INTRODUCTION

The basic thrust of this study is to establish a starting point from which an evaluation of public tastes concerning movie appreciation may proceed. Past research has largely failed to do this, relying instead on historical documentation as a means of evaluating the relationship between the public and the movies.

Gauging public taste is achieved through the direct measurement of movie attendance as reflected by the net rental amounts earned by a movie. The more popular the film the more money it may be expected to earn. Thus, public taste and the level of movie popularity are equated. In some respects movie attendance is a crude measure of public taste in that simple attendance does not necessarily imply a favorable reaction to a movie. Yet, the selection of a film for viewing must be based on some criteria whether it be simply "killing time" or some more aesthetic reason involving potential movie appreciation.

A review of previous literature suggests that movie attendance in the early years of the industry was nonselective. The public would attend whatever movie was available. Through the years, as the novelty of the movies, as well as the excitement generated by succeeding technological innovations, wore off, other motivations for movie attendance became more important. Simple entertainment was soon supplied by television, and the movies were constrained to supply entertainment of higher quality.

Thus, the appreciation of a film's potential quality became an

element in the public's selection of movie entertainment. The degree to which this is true is the central question to be answered by the present study.

An extensive historical background of the movie industry is provided in Chapter One. The evolution of film quality is traced through the years highlighting the advancements and setbacks which have ultimately produced an industry spurred on by creative energies yet restricted by economic necessities. Chapter Two discusses the other element of major concern; i.e., the public. It is suggested that an increase in age and educational levels displayed by the movie-going public in recent years is reflected in their selection of movie entertainment. Having no qualitative measure from which to determine past public selectivity it may be deduced from the literature that the public's ability to discriminate film quality has increased with their age and educational level.

In this study, film quality is determined by professional movie reviews. Very likely, everyone who has ever seen a movie has, at one time or another, disagreed with a film critic's review. Movies being a product for massive public consumption constitute a familiar pastime for the average individual and are, therefore, subject to interpretation by each individual's prejudices and perceptions. Yet, professional film critics do represent the most educated and experienced sources of opinions on movies today. Consequently, their opinions are the most reliable indicators of film quality. Chapter Three defends this position presenting the film critic as a professional evaluator of film quality. It is also suggested that the film critic's influence is increasing due to the greater availability of film reviews in the mass media thereby increasing the

likelihood of exposure to an increasingly selective audience.

The relationship between public taste, as measured by film attendance, and film quality, as measured by critical review, establishes that starting point from which public tastes may be evaluated. That relationship makes a statement about the degree to which the public is able to appreciate film quality, thereby placing public taste at some level of sophistication and intellectual attainment. It is hypothesized that there is a direct correlation between movie attendance as reflected by earned rental amounts and critical review ratings such that more favorable review ratings should lead to greater film popularity. A positive relationship would suggest that the public is indeed discriminating in their movie selections, basing their decisions on some criteria of film quality.

Joffre Dumazedier has proposed a theory of movie attendance as a leisure activity which offers a possible explanation of the relationship between the public and the movies. Dumazedier's theory, discussed in Chapter Four, proposes that the movie-going public is altering its type of involvement through the movie experience. His studies point toward an emerging seriousness on the part of the public in their movie selection which would be congruent with increased public selectivity suggested by a positive correlation between movie attendance and critical review ratings.

Chapter Four also includes a review of a previous study conducted by Jules J. Wanderer (1970) in which public opinion and critical opinion of film quality are compared. Similarities and differences with the present study are discussed highlighting the problems in the Wanderer study. The present study attempts to resolve some of the methodological

difficulties found in Wanderer's research.

In addition to the analysis of the primary relationship between earned rental amounts and critical review ratings, several additional variables are introduced to consider other factors which might affect the major relationship: MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) film ratings (G, PG, R); type of film; and month of film release. The research design, including the selection of sample and the measurement of all the above variables are discussed in Chapter Five. Specific findings are presented in Chapter Six and include the following relationships: public response to the MPAA film ratings; public preferences to film type; the effect of month of film release on public response; critical review ratings and MPAA film ratings; critical preferences to film type; and comparisons of public taste and critical opinion in connection with the above relationships. Concluding the chapter is a discussion of the relationship between public taste and critical opinion and implications of the results as they inform the methods employed herein, possible change in public tastes, and new directions subsequent research may take.

## Chapter I

### THE MOVIES: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The movie industry is, without a doubt, an industry. Many people seem to forget this fact as they complain about the low quality of films. As Paul Mayersburg points out, the cinema is at least (my emphasis) 50 percent business (Mayersburg, 1968, p. 180), and, as such, film producers are out to make a profit. The only way to do that is to make movies that are popular with the largest number of people they can reach. This task is very difficult to achieve on a consistent basis. Tamar Lane, as early as 1923, noted this difficulty in pleasing the public: "For every first-rate photoplay of merit that has been a popular success, I will name five that have received the public's stamp of disapproval or indifference" (Lane, 1913, p. 95). In more contemporary times, Mayersburg supports this view: "for most directors with some talent the combination of wide success and significant critical recognition happens about once, or at the most twice, in a whole career" (1968, p. 174). "Film has to appeal to a broader audience than other art--not to thrive but to survive," Charlton Heston concludes, "and nobody can ever predict accurately what an audience will like" (Heston, 1979, p. 63).

From the very beginning of the film industry, producers have struggled to give the public what it wants, for without the public, sustained economic growth was and is impossible. The industry has grown both economically and creatively; however, this growth has not always been

harmonious. Indeed, there are those who view the history of the cinema as open competition between the moneymakers and the film-makers; i.e., profit versus creativity. To some extent, this observation may be true. But, it is also true that the economic needs of the studios have spurred creativity both aesthetically and technically and vice versa. It has long been the contention of the studio moneymakers that creativity and box-office blockbusters do not mix. In the past, this may very well have been true. Certainly cinema history would seem to bear this out. Many classic movies have, of course, been produced, but beginning in the 1960's and continuing to the present, a new independence in film production has produced many startling movies--"The Graduate", "Easy Rider," "Midnight Cowboy", "The Godfather", "The Deer Hunter"--which would seem to refute the above contention. Not only did these films display new creative talents and innovations, they were also financially successful. Here is an indication of a shift in public taste toward the more critically acclaimed, and therefore, one might assume, better movies.

Of course, no one can predict consistently what an audience will like. This is not to say that the movie industry does not try to evaluate its audience. It is true that in the early years of the industry little effort was made to learn who the audience was. It was not necessary. As Robert Sklar points out: "The movie moguls, for most of their careers, had been indifferent to systematic investigation of their patrons taking pride in their seat of the pants intuition about what pleased audiences" (Sklar, 1975, pp. 270-271). But, they could afford to be all-knowing in those days. Films were new, stars were being born, and the public was enthralled. "Everyone" went to the movies. Unfortunately, as with every

innovation, the newness wore off and the love affair between the movies and the public diminished.

The film industry in American can be said to have begun in 1896 when Thomas Edison established the first American film production studio which he called "Black Maria." The production there consisted of brief action films, most of them single shots, designed for use in the Kinetoscope peepboxes which soon flourished at sideshows and penny arcades. Edison held a very narrow view of the potentials of this new industry: "Edison thought films did best, and would do best, within a peepshow set-up like the Kinetoscope" (Kuhns, 1972, p.3). He resisted any technical extensions of his invention, feeling that it was merely a fad soon to play itself out.

Others, however, were more farsighted. In France, Louis and Auguste Lumiere significantly advanced films by refashioning Edison's work to produce a projector capable of creating larger, life-size images. These larger films were introduced to America on April 23, 1896 and the industry started its rapid growth. The successful premiere of the Lumiere films prompted vaudeville halls everywhere to invest in these new projectors called Vitascope. "Movies became immediately popular with all audiences," William Kuhns tells us, "convincing showmen that this new kind of entertainment could and would make money" (1972, p. 4).

As the market grew, Nickelodeons, theaters designed exclusively for the showing of films, spread throughout the country bringing new talents and investments to the industry. Obviously, movies could and did make money; of course, much of the film industry's initial success must be attributed to the novelty of a new invention. "Movies," Kuhns explains,

"were rarely longer than two minutes and usually featured single actions shot from one perspective" (1972, p. 4). Certainly these early films could hold only momentary interest with the public. The potential of the film was recognized by two men who made enormous contributions to the future of the industry through their style and techniques: Georges Melies in France and Edwin S. Porter in America. "It has been said that Melies opened the way to the use of film as illusion and Porter to the use of film for narrative" (Kuhns, 1972, p. 5). Melies, in his search for new theatrical effects, and Porter's use of new techniques, such as the close-up and the principles of editing, established the path for future film production. Porter's work, particularly "The Great Train Robbery," had another lasting effect: "The excitement that the film generated through its skillful handling of cross-editing made it possibly the most important film of the decade. An audience that had thrilled to 'The Great Train Robbery' could not be satisfied anymore with simplistic three-scene morality stories" (Kuhns, 1972, p. 10). The audiences, who were becoming increasingly bored by the early, primitive films, were won back by the story film style introduced by Porter.

The creativity of these early film-makers was severely hampered by the fact that they were operating within a completely new framework. As Thorold Dickinson points out: "These first explorers had nothing to which they could refer; everything that happened posed a new question to which they had to invent an answer" (Dickinson, 1971, p. 2). Consequently, many early film-makers looked to the theatre for their answers. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, the movies are not theatre. By relying upon the theatre for answers, the cinema was restricting its own



potential creativity. While affording the film-makers time in which to experiment, this situation stifled the majority of producers and directors into a limited range of production, working to the detriment of the industry.

Another force was unknowingly preventing the growth and creativity of the industry in these early years. The Motion Picture Patents Company, often called the Trust, was founded in 1908. Edison had always considered the movie camera and projector as his inventions because the basic mechanism of both were based upon his patented invention, the Kinetoscope. Edison failed to patent the Kinetoscope outside of the United States, thus European film-makers could pursue whatever paths in film production they wished while ignoring the restrictions placed by the Trust on American film-making. The Trust, organized by nine equipment manufacturers, who were also some of the major film producers (Edison, Biograph, Kalem, Vitagraph, Lubin, Selig, Essanay, Star Films and Pathe), attempted to monopolize the movie industry by controlling the necessary equipment and production. Only those exhibitors licensed by the Trust were given projectors and were required to show only Trust films. Independent film-makers, who were fairly prevalent at the time due in part to the lateness in the establishment of the Trust, were, nonetheless, harassed, often violently, by the Trust. It was a period of intense, unscrupulous competition.

In retrospect, the Trust did have some positive consequences, one of which was the setting down of guidelines, particularly in terms of merger, which would help define the movie business as an industry. The Trust also helped establish Hollywood as the movie-making capital by forcing independent production West to avoid detection by the Trust.

The conservative nature of the Trust is not difficult to understand. Once again, the money-makers were in control and, as Kuhns points out:

. . . a fast turnover in audiences was the only way in which Nickelodeons could make money. Consequently, by 1908, production had been standardized. Every director . . . was expected to produce at least two one-reel movies a week. While this schedule severely hampered creative possibilities, it forced producers to generate new methods. The motion picture did not languish during the latter part of the first decade, but it did not progress very radically either (1972, p. 16).

Progress in Europe, however, was of a different nature. Adaptations of famous literary and theatrical subjects, most of which were considerably longer than the fifteen minute action films prevalent in America, were being made. In 1912, Adolph Zukor obtained permission from the Trust to import one of these films, "Queen Elizabeth" starring Sarah Bernhardt. While its showing in America was successful, similar films produced by Zukor's Famous Players Company were not, leading the Trust, as well as many independents, to oppose the idea of longer films.

Producers found that shows that may be successful in a Broadway theatre would likely fail at the Nickelodeons. Kuhns offers one explanation: ". . . in their first years movies were shunned by the elite, the upper classes, and the critics . . . the cultured and the rich looked upon nickelodeons and their fare as a crude novelty that would soon run its course" (1972, p. 17). Nonetheless, movies were being seen by hundreds of thousands of people every week, and the films were directed at that audience: "They were stories of the streets, of thieves and robbers, of factory workers and policemen and firemen. It was Porter, more than anyone else, who established the dominant twin themes in the motion picture; action and an implicit social concern" (Kuhns, 1972, p. 17).

But the idea of longer movies, called feature films, had been introduced and the release of "Quo Vadis" in 1913 "effectively showed that length did not necessarily mean boring theatricality" (Stephenson, et al., 1971, p. 185). In the same year, D. W. Griffith was to prove this beyond any doubt. Griffith was a pioneer in the film industry and, as Dickinson tells it, he "rebelled against the Trust that was trying to keep the American film short and cheap; and embarked on the effort to raise the standing of cinema to the level of theatre. The result was the most outrageously and controversially successful film in history, 'The Birth of a Nation' (1914)" (1971, p. 17).

D. W. Griffith was a legendary figure in cinema history. His work was the first movie to attract audiences across the class lines and the first to be critically recognized. He helped make the feature film the major form of movie production in the United States. And, as Dickinson points out: "In exploiting the personality of the player through judicious shifting of the camera, Griffith did much to found the star system" (1971, p. 18). Most importantly, however, by his mastery of the medium, he established the director as the pivotal character in film production. For a time, due to his skill as a "dramatic visualizer", the director became a greater draw than the actor (Dickinson, 1971, p. 18).

Unfortunately, Griffith's success was relatively short-lived. His next project, "Intolerance" (1916), was too ambitious for American audiences. His techniques and dramatizations were beyond their comprehension. The results were widespread: "In America financiers ceased to regard the film-makers [directors] as the king-pins of production and decided to build up the film-stars in their place, putting control in the hands of the

producer, aided by his cabinet of organizers and writers. This came to be known as the Hollywood system" (Dickinson, 1971, p. 19). The money-makers chose to exploit the star system in favor of the creative potentialities of the individual director in order to promote success.

The trend was set. Hollywood was in the feature film business and the old style producers were dying out, as were the Nickelodeons. With the advent of feature films, new, more luxurious, and more comfortable theatres were needed. Feature films were also accompanied by higher costs. Higher costs for more ambitious undertakings, larger, more elaborate sets, and costlier stars.

The changes in Hollywood were also marked by a 1917 court decision against the Trust, ending what was left of their monopoly. By this time, the decision had little effect, however, because Edison, Kalem, Lubin and Biograph had all gone out of business being either unwilling or unable to compete with the feature film.

Escalating costs were of little concern at this time. World War I had broken out and European film production was severely disrupted leaving the United States with a virtual monopoly in the worldwide film market. This not only bolstered their economic conditions for the time being, it also helped establish the "mythology" of the American stars throughout the world ensuring the demand for American films in the years to come (Stephenson, 1971, p. 187).

During these war years, the nature of films began to change. As one might expect, the prewar escapist styles gave way to films of a more propagandistic nature. But, it was not until after the war that the change in films became obvious. Kuhns explains the beginnings of this change:

The signing of the Armistice . . . ended not only the war but a phase of American moviemaking. At the time, the signs were hardly auspicious. Most studios had only war stories with patriotic themes. Within days, it became apparent that audiences were not interested in them. The studios, which had slipped largely into formula movies over the past several years, were threatened by the lack of demand for their backlog of war films (1972, p. 55).

It was time for some changes. Technically the innovations developed by Griffith as well as the influence of the Soviet and German Expressionist schools launched a new interest in film technique. Indeed, several prominent German actors and directors immigrated to Hollywood. The mobility of the camera was explored. The importance of editing, camera work, and set design were recognized and became increasingly important.

Kuhns brings up another change: "It was as though the war, a shattering blow to so many of the comfortable illusions cherished by the Victorian era, had epitomized the entire transformation going on within Western society. The movies reflected this change, and the differences in films before and after the war were acute" (1972, p. 76). Claire Johnston would agree, pointing out that "the foremost genres during this period were the domestic dramas often depicting the breakdown of established mores . . ." (Johnston, U.S.A.: Into the Twenties, 1971, p. 34). "The old standard distinctions between good guys and bad guys, between vamps and virgins, between sin and sanctity, broke down as Hollywood probed more complex motives and a changing moral climate" (Kuhns, 1972, p. 77). Contributing to these changes were the radical transformations brought about by any war. Still more can be explained when one examines the pre-war and postwar movie audiences. Kuhns explains it clearly:

One fundamental change within the movies lay in audiences. Before the war, movie audiences tended to be lower-class

workingmen and their families, and most movies were made specifically for that audience. But as the nation grew wealthier in the twenties, many of the people who had been considered lower-class . . . became the new middle class. Movies after the war were made to appeal to the middle class; they dealt more with man at leisure than man at work. They didn't usually assume economic hardship but assumed a certain basic wealth (1972, p. 76).

Indeed, times were good. Even though costs were constantly rising due to longer running movies, more elaborate sets and costumes, and more demanding stars, the public was willing and able to pay the price.\* Hollywood, in the postwar period, was, perhaps more so than at any time, the dream capital of the country. Movie stars were the new aristocracy of the world. In fact, times may have been too good. The changes in morality worldwide and the incredible wealth generated by the movie industry also made Hollywood the sin capital of the world. Generally, Hollywood thrived on scandals, but the level of moral decadence apparent in Hollywood during the early twenties (example: The Fatty Arbuckle trial) brought forth cries of public indignation. The studio executives, recognizing the threat to their system from public boycott or government intervention, appointed their own moral sentinel. William Hays opened the offices of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., in March, 1922. The "Hays office", as it came to be known, was completely internal to the industry and of a censorial nature. Externally, pressure for moral decency was kept up by the Legion of Decency (formed by the Catholic Bishops in 1934).

Not surprisingly, this censorship was damaging for the movies. The studios found that it was, as Kuhns puts it, ". . . better to stick to the kind of movie that audiences and censors both approved--the westerns, the swashbuckling romances, the fluffy bedroom comedy with inviolate virginity

and ironclad morality--which is precisely the direction Hollywood took" (1972, p. 117). Studio control was tightened and production was more closely watched. Consequently, Hollywood began to operate in a more conservative manner. Another factor leading to increased studio control and conservatism was, oddly enough, a technical advancement which would ultimately make great strides in film creativity--the introduction of sound.

The inadequacy of silent films may have been recognized by some in the early twenties with the introduction of radio. As Dickinson points out: "The range of silent cinema was wide but shallow. Every kind of subject that exists today was available then. But there was no depth because there was no speech, and in most cases without speech there can be no characterization except in the limited field of mime" (1971, p. 35). Except for the panoramas and shocks supplied by the westerns and the antics of the comedians, the movies related basically simple stories. Plot lines could not be extensive nor characterizations deep when restricted by the use of scene cards as the chief means of explanation in a movie. As a result, the mass audience was becoming disenchanted with the movies. Sound was introduced not so much as a means of expanding the movies creatively<sup>1</sup>, but as a gimmick to draw back the audiences. The huge success of the first sound feature, "The Jazz Singer" released by Warner Brothers in 1927, compelled all the studios to follow suit. By the end of the twenties, the silent film was dead.

The immediate results for the movies themselves amounted to a step backward in terms of creativity. As in the beginnings of the movie industry, the introduction of sound presented filmmakers with questions for which there were no basic answers. And, Dickinson states, ". . . as

before, film-makers had to continue to earn their living from film to film while they were exploring new techniques of entertainment" (1971, p. 35). A sufficient number of sound films had to be made to keep the theaters open once the decision had been made to convert to sound. Dickinson explains:

A stop-gap had to be found to fill the vacuum during which the conversion could be executed, the subjects found, trials made, and errors eliminated in adapting artists, craftsmen, and players to their new careers. The logical stop-gap was theatre, the simplest sounds were dialogue and music . . . A film composed of dialogue sequences differed little from scenes in a play was made in days rather than weeks by a theatre director and this took care of the essential need for quantity of product (1971, p. 64).

The introduction of sound created quite a tumult within the social ranks of Hollywood also. Established stars disappeared because of their accents or inadequate voices: Emil Jannings, Vilma Banky, John Gilbert, Corinne Griffith, Norma Talmadge. The obvious place to find replacements was the theatre. Thus, the emergence of stage personalities such as Ruth Chatterton, Fredric March, Ann Harding and Paul Muni. The changeover in Hollywood amounted to a Broadway invasion as studios replaced their actors, directors and crews. Kuhns contends that: "There is no question but that the Broadway invasion of the late twenties and early thirties marked a regression in movies. Movies became stage plays, filmed with less vitality, less editing, less visual excitement than movies made fifteen years earlier" (1972, pp. 110-111).

The introduction of sound also had a major effect on the economic conditions of the movie industry. The conversion to sound, both in production and in exhibition, necessitated huge capital expenditures. Much of this capital came from Wall Street, and by the late twenties all the pioneers



except Fox and Laemmle had allowed control to pass to banking interests (Stephenson, et al., 1971, p. 189). Stephenson points out that: ". . . as soon as films became a big capital industry using expensive equipment and purpose-made buildings, conservatism set in, and change became more expensive and more difficult" (1971, p. 191).

Studio control of production increased. Economic criteria were of more importance than craftsmanship and the making of a good movie. The producers, rather than the director, came to be the dominant figure in filmmaking, and every project was geared toward box office success. The role of the director was not seen as a crucial ingredient in success. Certainly not as important as big-name stars, large production budgets, and reliable subject matter such as a bestseller or a long running play. This is not to say that the more able directors were not recognized:

The twenties did mark one of the high periods for the American director. Native directors like Thomas Iuce, Cecil B. De Mille, Henry King, Rex Ingram and James Cruze kept American movies moving--however slowly--toward a cinematic realism and a more sophisticated use of the medium. Even more important, though, were the great immigrant directors brought to Hollywood from the filmmaking capitals of Europe, most notably Germany: F. W. Murnan, Erich von Stroheim, Ernst Lubitsch, Josef von Sternberg, and Victor Seastrom. All in all, the twenties were, for American movie-making, a rich, fertile period, but thanks far more to the directors than to the producers (Kuhns, 1972, p. 56).

Economic problems brought tighter studio control, and the Depression, while somewhat delayed in affecting the cinema, did compound these problems. In the early years of the Depression the public, still thrilled at hearing their favorite stars speak and looking for an entertaining escape from their situations, continued to flock to the movies. It was not until 1933 that the Depression began to hit the movie industry. "By mid-summer of that year some 5,000 of 16,000 cinemas in the United States had closed" (Butter,

1971, p. 49). Through merging, the studios were able to survive. The independent companies either disappeared or merged into eight major studios: M-G-M, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, RKO, Universal, Columbia, and United Artists. Consequently, as Ivan Butter points out: "Films of the thirties were more likely to be typed according to the studios from which they came than to a single name such as Griffith or Stroheim" (1971, p. 49). Directors were more closely supervised, production was studio controlled, and, during these shaky times, the old formulas for success were breaking down. The studio's answer was to spend more money on each film. It was believed that one lavish production costing a million dollars had more chances of success than two or three less costly movies.

Although attendance did not maintain pre-Depression levels, the industry fared much better than other businesses. Indeed, movies proved to be one of the better investments of the period; while other businesses were failing, people still continued to go to the movies. It was not until 1940, however, that movies once again attained pre-Depression attendance levels. Undoubtedly, this resurgence in the movie business, as well as worldwide economic recovery, was spurred by World War II. For the movie industry what followed, of course, was war movies. Naturally, war movies were not the only films made; musicals proved to be one of the more popular genres of the time. Whatever the nature of the film, however, the war years were good years, economically at least, for the industry. Penelope Houston explains why: "This was an entertainment industry with the firmest of all assets: an automatic, unquestioning, unshakeable audience. If a film did badly at the box-office, there was always another behind it on the assembly line; if the public stayed away one week, they would be back the next (Houston, 1963,

pp. 43-44).

World War II helped to spawn a new realism in films. The Italians started this trend but the Americans intelligently commercialized it. Perhaps the horrors of war helped Hollywood to recognize the shallowness of their work, their failure to deal honestly with human relationships.

Kuhns describes this period:

Throughout the late forties and well into the fifties, a small but intense group of directors and producers worked at making movies that were serious in theme, honest in their approach, and concluding with something other than the classic 'happy ending'. Films of the late forties took on a new and deeper interest in psychological and social problems (e.g.--'The Lost Weekend', 1945) (1972, p. 191).

Houston also recognized this trend, noting: "The new thing in the cinema, in these years, became the location-made thriller (Jules Dassin's "The Naked City"), and the problem picture which overlapped it (Elia Kazan's "Gentleman's Agreement") (1963, p. 44).

Films had reached a new maturity, but so, apparently, had the audiences. The industry was confused and while, on the one hand, it produced creative films exploiting the new realism to the fullest it produced, on the other hand, entertainment of the blandest and most simple type. Houston states: "Before the war, when audience taste could be gauged with tolerable accuracy, a few films did spectacularly well, a few did extremely badly, and most paid their way. Now, as in the theatre, the gap between failure and success widens every year" (1963, p. 176).

It became necessary to know who was going to the movies, and to make, as Lane said, "every effort to feel the public pulse and prescribe accordingly" (1963, p. 97). Studies were conducted in 1945-46 to determine the nature of the movie audience. To this day, however, "they have only the

vaguest knowledge of their audiences. The numbers they gain on the box-office gross are the primary indices of successful mass communication" (White & Averson, 1968, pp. 15-16). They did not, and still do not, have any clear idea of what the public wants. Houston notes that: ". . . one of the odd things about the cinema industry has been that it treats its products like merchandise without going in for the kind of market research which might give it a clear lead" (1963, p. 177). She goes on to explain why this is:

Hollywood, at various times in its history, has tried this kind of pretesting of reactions to remarkably little effect. The alternative is the kind of desperate chopping and changing which may go on after a sneak preview, when a bad audience response brings on an attack of nerves.<sup>2</sup> But the wider and more general questions, of what audiences want from the cinema, and what they think they are getting, and how they like it, habitually find their answers in cliches (Houston, 1963, p. 177).

How then can we account for the film industry's continued existence?

William Fadiman sheds some light on this question: "There are people, both inside and outside of the industry, who believe that the majority of Hollywood films are simply a mirroring of public taste and that Hollywood merely complies with the demands of that public" (Fadiman, 1972, p. 12). There is widespread support for this view in the literature. Adolph Zukor, one of the founders of Paramount Pictures, said, "The public is never wrong" (Fadiman, 1972, p. 12). Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, said, "The movie is a reflector and not an innovator" (Fadiman, 1972, p. 12). Gilbert Seldes explains how the filmmakers, or media managers as he labels the producers of mass media, view the situation: "We (the managers) have had our great successes when we have given the public what the public wants. We do not set up as

dictators of taste; we cannot force the public to like what it does not like. We test our offerings in private before they are made public; we submit them to the acid test of the box office and the ratings" (Seldes, 1968, pp. 31-32). Pauline Kael, a noted film critic, agrees with this position: "Hollywood follows the mass audience and the mass audience follows Hollywood; there is no leader. The tastes of the mass audience belong to sociology, not aesthetics. Those who make big films do not consider primarily the nature of the medium and what they want to do with it, they try to keep ahead of the mass audience" (Kael, 1971, p. 215). She goes on to say: "Our mass culture (meaning mass media entertainment) has always been responsive to the instincts and needs of the public. Though it exploits these needs without satisfying them, it does nonetheless throw up images that indicate social tensions and undercurrents" (Kael, 1965, p. 45).

If the movies are merely a reflection of the mass audience's taste, why do complaints continue to be heard about the quality of the movies? The blame can quite conveniently be laid upon the public. Lane maintains that: "There is no other group of men in the amusement world that knows what the mob wants any better than the movie men, and they are turning out A-1 rabble-food with a fair degree of consistency" (1923, p. 92).<sup>3</sup> Benjamin De Casseres, formerly of the New York Times, said: "Give us a better public and we will give you better pictures" (Lane, 193, p. 99). Fadiman further supports the movie-makers: "Like all industries, it (movie industry) survives on its ability to please the majority of its customers--a majority whose judgment and discrimination are of a substantially low order. If we wish to cater to the minority of filmgoers seeking products of a high artistic order, we cannot do so without suffering gigantic losses" (1968,

p. 352). Finally, Lane points out that in fact, "... the efforts of the industry to give the public what it wants is the main reason for the stereotyped productions which the more intelligent screen followers object to" (1923, p. 97).<sup>4</sup>

As convenient as this may be, the quality of movies does not entirely depend upon public acceptance. Of course, in a large measure it does, but as David White and Richard Averson point out, the film-makers are in a manipulative position: "Whatever his intimate motives for viewing may be, a member of any audience can watch only those motion pictures that the 'media managers' make available" (1968, p. 21).

Therefore, by limiting the available product, the "media managers" are, in effect, dictating what is shown to the public. Gilbert Seldes describes it quite well: "By offering their wares, the mass media create audiences. When the wares are withdrawn, the audiences cease to exist; they become only potential audiences. When the wares which could satisfy a particular want are not offered and others are offered in profusion, the latent desire for the unoffered kind may dwindle or disappear" (1968, p. 33). Consequently, the question may be asked as to whether or not the public is getting what it wants, and, if not, who is to blame?

To a large extent, it can be said that the public is content with the films presented to them. As Fadiman points out: "Neither Hollywood executives nor most of its directors have any concern with film as an art form, unless it leads to a profit. Should American audiences change and flock to those few theatres presenting films with superior artistic and ideological values, Hollywood would promptly change as well" (1972, p. 81). While Fadiman's estimation of the artistic value of films is somewhat harsh, his

concept is essentially correct. The public holds the ultimate say-so in their wallets; by withholding profits, the public can dictate to the "media managers". While it is true that, as Seldes says, ". . . there is no way of telling what an audience, or the public, would want if its tastes had not been formed by the programs (or films) between which alone it had to choose" (1968, p. 39). It is also true that by selective elimination, that is, refusing to attend a film not up to individual standards, whatever they may be, the public can make its wants known.

Of course, through the years, the public has dictated to the film-makers. In the past, dwindling attendance was boosted by technical advancement such as more sophisticated techniques, feature length films, the introduction of sound and color. Little attention was paid to the nature of the film itself. Naturally, there were period films reflecting the social atmosphere of the time, but by and large, the industry stuck to the various genres (gangster, western, horror, musical, etc.) which had shown themselves to be popular.

Technical advancements, while causing a big "splash" at its outset, did not sustain interest for the audiences, as the industry was to find out in its competition with television. Alan Howden states:

Rather early, in the late forties, there had been a different and, so it seemed to some, an alternative approach to winning back dwindling audiences by moving away from the more predictable, escapist plots towards stories which reflected attitudes and problems of the postwar society. This social realist trend was developed during the fifties, often by independent producers rather than the major studios . . . By the end of the decade, however, the two apparent alternatives of wide-screen spectaculars (wide-screen was developed to combat the influence of television) on the one hand and modestly budgeted 'adult' subjects on the other hand, to a large extent, has been mutually assimilated (Into the Fifties, 1971, p. 33).<sup>5</sup>

In a sense, Hollywood was forced to mature, that is, to reevaluate

the nature of its product. Reduced attendance for the old "factory" style film forced the studios outside. The realism trend in the postwar years affected not only subject matter, more and more movies were made on location (i.e., in the real world rather than on a studio set) to achieve a more realistic atmosphere. This trend had the added advantage of reducing production costs by eliminating costly sets and union salaries set at high market ranges. Directors wanted to make movies that people could relate to on some level other than pure escapism. Many of the techniques and themes used so frequently today were begun during this period.

Another indication that the old Hollywood would have to change was the influx and added acceptance of foreign films, particularly the Italian neo-realism films. "Admittedly," Kuhn states, "these films did not make a great inroad on the majority of the American audience, but the newer generation of directors, such as Billy Wilder, Elia Kazan, Jules Dassin, and Carol Reed, were obviously influenced by this trend" (1972, p. 185). The acceptance of foreign films, certainly a major force in film production today, was begun during this postwar period. Of course, foreign works have always influenced film production as a whole, but before this time only the intelligentsia had appreciated foreign wares. Starting after the war, foreign films have built an ever increasingly significant proportion of the American audience. These two factors, the increase in socially significant films and the acceptance of foreign films, also indicate a growing selectivity in film production. What is today called specialized films were becoming popular in postwar America. Although not ready to admit it, Hollywood was losing its mass appeal.

Hollywood was not, however, maturing on its own. The movie audience



was maturing also, perhaps due to the influences of wartime society or perhaps due to their greater sophistication with movies in general. Whatever the cause, the movie industry was following the public. The promise of these new trends was, however, cut short by three major crises in the movie industry: 1) the investigation of the industry by the House Un-American Activities Committee; 2) the forced selling of the studio-owned theatres; and 3) the introduction of television. These events sent shock waves through the industry, and while some of these changes were ultimately beneficial, the immediate results were devastating.

The atmosphere in Hollywood during the late forties and on into the fifties was dominated by fear. Representative J. Parnell Thomas, chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, began his investigation of communism in motion pictures in October, 1947. Senator Joseph McCarthy kept up the persecution well into the fifties with his celebrated witch hunts. The Committee sent ten Hollywood writers and directors to prison for refusing to betray themselves or their friends and hundreds of others were blacklisted. At a time when Hollywood needed its best minds, most were stifled by government harassment. Houston describes the conditions:

No one really denies that what did the damage was the blacklist, the atmosphere of panicky tension, the fear of what names might be thrown around the hearings; all the harassments and pressures of the years of suspicion. The whole business took a heavy toll not only in immediate human terms . . . but in Hollywood reactions. American films tended to become either very safe and cautious and respectable, or expressions, tinged with hysteria, of an underlying strain and uncertainty (1963, pp. 51-52).

The second major change in the movie industry was also at the hands of the United States Government. Up until 1950, the major studios were in the rather lucrative position of supplying films for their own theatres.

A Supreme Court ruling enforced Anti-Trust legislation which ended this vertical monopoly (i.e., ownership of both production and exhibition) which had been part of the industry from its earliest days. The studios were forced to sell their theatre chains. Thus, as a time when the industry needed to pull itself together to face the onslaught of television, it was split. Of course, the selling of the theatres generated much needed income for the technical advancements being implemented, but the severing of studio ties with exhibition also meant a reduction in production as well as a greater likelihood that major studios would themselves move into television production, or at least make some quick cash by selling off their film stock to television.

On the other hand, the selling of the theatres also opened the industry to more independent productions which no longer had the problem of finding theatres to play their films (the studio chains generally played only studio productions). Soon, as Houston states, "Companies found it easier, and financially a great deal safer, to lease their studio space and facilities to independent production units and to cut down on their own immediate involvement in film-making" (1963, p. 61). Kuhns agrees:

Throughout the fifties, one of the major trends among studios would be to function as bankrollers of independent productions rather than to act as total overseers and producers of assembly-line movies. This trend, begun in the early fifties, would become increasingly significant in the sixties, when studios like MGM and Warner Brothers sold off their backlots and much of their film inventory doing little work in the studios other than television (1972, p. 189).

Indeed, improved technology and higher studio costs made it possible as well as desirable to make as much of a film as possible on location.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, the anti-trust action against the major studios was advantageous for film-making itself. "It provided," as Kuhns points out, "a way

of breaking through one of Hollywood's most grievous nemeses: the standardization of production. Movies began to carry the signature of the men who made them" (1972, p. 189).

The most devastating change to hit Hollywood at this time, however, was television. The first impact was felt in the late forties. The rapid growth of television resulted in a 40 percent decline in movie attendance by 1952. Just as the "talkies" had saved the industry earlier, Hollywood placed its immediate hopes in technical advances.

Basically, there were then three major differences between the movies and television: 1) movies could be in color, while television was black and white; 2) movies were shown on a larger screen; and 3) movies were potentially three dimensional. Technical factors in 3-D photography proved to be too inflexible to be generally accepted by the industry, as well as financially unrewarding. 3-D movies had a rather short and insignificant life-span. The introduction of Cinerama in 1952 pointed the way to the major technological advance of the period and the major method of competition against television. Cinerama itself was too cumbersome to be practical and Cinemascope, introduced by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1953, proved to be the generally accepted form of wide-screen projection. For a while, the wide-screens seemed to do their job: ". . . box-office receipts in the U. S. A. had declined steadily from the 1946 peak of \$1,512,000,000 to \$1,134,000,000 in 1952 but revived to \$1,415,000,000 in 1955" (Economic Trends, 1971, p. 142). Considerable amounts of money were spent on these technical innovations which were designed to emphasize the superiority of movies over television. The ultimate movie was processed in fresh, bright color, shown on a wide-screen, and enhanced by

stereophonic sound. "It was all very exciting, very breathtaking," as Kuhns states, "but, it signaled no major advance in movies" (1972, p. 189).

Indeed, as was true with past innovations, such as "talkies", the creative end of production suffered. Faced with this new crisis of television, the industry returned to a system of standardized production and of imitating the most recent hit. Kuhns describes the movies of the fifties:

The fifties were largely a decade of genre devices: musicals, bedroom comedies, biblical and historical epics, westerns, biographies, science fiction. Even the best movies (with a few fine exceptions) kept within their genres and promised no new orientation for movies afterwards. It was a decade in which studios clung to older techniques, older devices, older ideas . . . (1972, p. 196).

Hollywood tried to make the same kind of pictures it always had, only these were for larger screens.

As they found out, this formula no longer worked. Houston points out one problem: "The very fact that the big-screen revolution was so complete meant that the cinema needed something more to attract its audience. If all the screens are larger, then size alone has lost its selling power" (1963, p. 56). What's more, the industry found that the movie habit was broken, movies were no longer necessities, they had become luxuries. They were replaced by television. The average, unpretentious form of entertainment, designed to help its audience to pass the time, was now supplied by the television, and for free.

Hollywood had to fight for its audience. They had to make the movies look important and emphasize the quality of the cinema as opposed to the commonality of television. They adopted the strategy of the super-spectacular, or "blockbuster", fortified by a strong advertising campaign. These films, "Ben Hur", "South Pacific", etc., cost millions to make and

thousands to sell. Houston describes the atmosphere of Hollywood of the fifties:

But they (directors) are inhabitants of a nervous industry, which has put its trust in best-sellers, hit plays, pre-sold properties, and in doing so cut down on the area in which they can be really creative. But when the train is pulling a few million pounds of shareholders' money, and the fortunes of a company may be riding with it, what director could risk running it off the rails by taking changes, breaking through this standard of intimidating, unquestioned professionalism into the headier and more dangerous regions of creative risk (1963, p. 60)?

Stepping outside of these historical matters for a moment, one might ask just who it is that controls the quality of movies. It would appear that creativity, in most cases, takes a backseat to the profit margin. Seldes makes an interesting observation in this regard: "The generalization is that every country gets the popular arts it deserves" (1950, p. 233).

White and Averson write:

We realize that audiences themselves must share some of the blame, if any is due. Because the audiences of motion pictures and television are not known to the media managers, the prime source of feedback must be the sheer numbers of ratings and box-office receipts. Therefore, even though the preferences of large audiences may disappoint or repel him (the media manager), the ever-present ratings give him a convenient rationalization (1968, p. 22).

The movie producers, however, must share in the blame because they tend to hide behind these rationalizations. By relying on the ratings the producers are limiting the available product and thereby making the public work against itself. White and Averson continue: "In a sense, 'mass audiences' are their own cultural executioner; by choosing one program or film over another, they reduce the range of alternatives that might be offered to them. In mass communications, the tastes of majorities tend to become self-reinforcing" (1968, pp. 22-23). Rather than take any risks, the

majority of film producers are content to play it safe and stick to the old formulas.

This is not to say that the movie industry never breaks out of its mold. Indeed, as shall be seen, the sixties were quite innovative. Then too, the industry has always had its serious, creative side. In general, they have always been able to find an audience for work that has a genuine appeal for either the masses or for a minority. Thus, we see the super-spectaculars on one hand, the lower-budgeted films of intelligence and concern with human issues on the other. But, as Houston reminds us, "to be really successful, a film has still to cut across all the barriers of age and class and nationality. The fortunes of the production sector of the industry are riding with the few films that achieve this rather than the many that do not" (1963, p. 176).

As the movie industry moved into the sixties, several lasting effects of the television invasion can be seen. First, the movie studios, while in direct competition with television, were also in an excellent position to capitalize on television as a new market. There was an obvious new market for the studio's backlog of old movies. Television needed these films and were anxious to get them. The resultant revenues were like money from heaven for the studios that had long since given up hope of ever receiving any benefit from their old stockpile of films. Indeed, even today, ". . . the ultimate value of a feature film for sale to television can be an important factor in financing the initial production and all the three American television networks are now active in feature film production either directly or through financial participation" (Howden, *Economic Trends*, 1971, pp. 242-243).

"Moreover," as Kuhns states, "the demands of television production turned increasingly to adventure and action series that were better made on film than in T. V. studios--and better made on the Hollywood backlots than anywhere else. By the late fifties, movie studios were producing the dominant number of series on prime time television . . . ." (1972, p. 190). Thus, the relationship between the movie studios and television was mutually and financially beneficial. Of course, the movie exhibitors were left out in the cold. Television was a particularly bothersome thorn in the side of all exhibitors. The advent of television and the subsequent move by the movie studios into television production meant a cut back in feature film production. This fact, in combination with the new strategy of the "blockbuster" and the competition of television, heralded the end of the "B" movie or second feature film. By the mid-fifties Republic Studios and Monogram Studios had ceased production, and, perhaps the most bitterly ironic happenstance of all, RKO studios were taken over for television production in 1957. The exhibitors were losing their traditional audience to television and they had at their disposal fewer films to draw the audiences back.

The "blockbusters" kept the studios in business, but the run-of-the-mill film directed toward the movies' best customers kept the exhibitors in business. "The vast traditional audience of lower-paid middle-aged people were lost almost permanently, held captive by their television sets. The remaining audience was younger, better paid, perhaps more intelligent. By 1958 it was they whom Hollywood had to please to survive" (Howden, *Into the Fifties*, 1971, p. 50). Thus, we see, beginning in the later fifties and on into the sixties, the emergence of Elvis Presley as a movie star and the

beach party movies proliferating, the horror genre was playing directly to the youth market with such stellar features as "I Was a Teen-Age Werewolf."

Television provided an inexpensive form of at-home entertainment. One no longer had to go out to see a show. But the movie industry survived because, in general, people enjoy getting out of their homes. Indeed, as long as people enjoy going out, the movies will be there to supply entertainment. Certainly, the restaurant business has continued to flourish even though it is substantially cheaper to eat at home. It soon became apparent, however, that the people going out the most were younger than in the past. It should be noted here, that had television never been invented, the movie industry would probably still have been predominantly youth oriented. The "baby boom" children were growing up and they constituted a very large block of buying power. It would be interesting to study the relationship between movie production and the progression of the "baby boom" children. Speculatively, it would seem that the types of movies produced since the last "baby boom" have been geared toward that generation. That is, teen movies had their heyday in the early sixties just as the "boom" children were reaching their teens. Of course, if this speculation is true, it would follow that the movies are being made for progressively older age groups, and may, therefore, be of an increasingly mature nature. Certainly, movies today are more sophisticated technically. Creatively, there is some room for doubt.

There is little doubt that television dealt a disastrous blow to the movie industry. The fifties and early sixties may be seen as a period of confusion within the industry. Studios were scrambling not only to survive,



but to once again find their niche within the entertainment business. Competition came from many areas. The country was prosperous and people had the money to pursue many different forms of recreation. The proliferation of the automobile put the populace on wheels and opened even wider ranges of recreational activities. The drive-in theatre was, of course, the industry's answer to an America on wheels. But, all in all, the movies no longer held such a strong position in the entertainment industry. The weekly visit to the theatre was no longer necessary because other forms of recreation were readily available. "An industry which had encouraged its audience to regard it has a habit . . . discovered with a deep sense of shock and affront that the wares it had been selling for so long as necessities were suddenly being treated as luxuries. The nightly switch-on replaced the weekly visits to the pictures" (Houston, 1963, p. 12).

A decline in attendance does not, however, mean a less enthusiastic audience. In all likelihood, it would mean a more enthusiastic one. A larger proportion of the audience are there to see the film rather than to just kill time. As Houston states, ". . . people watch television, as they used to go to the movies, not to see something, but to see anything" (1963, p. 13). So, in a sense, television has benefited the movies. It has forced them to mature. Dickinson explains it clearly:

The theatre and music halls were unable to meet the need for distraction and, as cinema expanded, these old forms of entertainment were thrust aside by the brash newcomer. One result has been a rise in quality in the theatre, which despite all pessimism has attracted new audiences. This law of survival has respected itself in North America and Great Britain with the explosion of television. Cinema has been forced to shed much of its fat as the theatre had to do a generation before; or, it would also be true to say, weeding out has allowed potent ideas which were being strangled to be aired (1971, p. 1).

In the sixties, many of the creative and economic trends of the movie industry would culminate leaving the industry with a more or less new ball game. Creatively the fifties and early sixties may be seen as a watershed period for the film industry as a whole. Italian cinema had essentially played out the creative possibilities of neo-realism. The French industry was enmeshed in a sense of professionalism which obscured original thought. Both the British industry and Hollywood were muddling through the crisis of television. But, as the problems settled out and the rate of declining attendance slowed, the industry began to recognize, if not admit to, the validity of a statement by John Houseman, a Hollywood producer: "The real problem with American films today is who you are making them for . . . . Most of us face the harassing dilemma that we are working in a mass medium that has lost its mass audience . . . ." (Houston, 1963, p. 169). Movies tended to be split into two types: ". . . the big and the small; the expensive and the cheap; the very safe and the very daring--success can lie at either end of the scale but is unlikely to be found too near the middle" (Houston, 1963, p. 16).

Movies became more and more specialized. That is, specific themes, tailored to appeal to specific groups, were receiving some success. Much of this specialization may be attributed to the "nouvelle vogue" directors of France, who, in a large measure, brought life back into the ailing cinema of the fifties. Such men as Godard, Truffaut, Cassavetes, and Polanski were not afraid to change the rules, to shake things up. They were new and young. They were fresh, having never suffered under the burden of a suffocating studio. They were well matched for the audiences of the latter sixties. Kuhns recognized the change in the audiences: "Television had

usurped the majority of the older, more familiar (and less demanding) movie audience, leaving the theatres to the youth . . . who already had seen about as many movies as their folks--over television" (1972, p. 220). The importation of foreign films helped educate and shape this new audience, who came to expect more from a film than "kisses, gunplay, and a cast of thousands" (Kuhns, 1971, p. 219).

This trend toward specialization was aided by another trend involving the decline of the studio and the resurgence of the director as an independent film-maker, and the transfer of mass-production from the movies to television. Indeed, the major new directors of this period were independent, such men as Stanley Kubrick, Arthur Penn, Mike Nichols, and Sam Peckinpah.

Another creative trend which would reach its full potential in the sixties was the move away from the studio to location production. The appeal of authenticity was realized, and the stamp of systemization so often apparent in the studio factory method of production was effectively ended.

This move away from the studios, in spirit as well as geographically, was apparent in the new found success of foreign films as well as in the obvious acceptance of new ideas presented by the independent directors in such films as "Midnight Cowboy", "Bonnie and Clyde", and "In the Heat of the Night". Another indication of the extent of this drift away from the studios was the emergence and acceptance of underground productions. Perhaps more important creatively, however, was the introduction of new material which had once been considered unsuitable for general distribution. As Kingsley Canham states: "Movies like Schlesinger's 'Midnight Cowboy',

Hopper's 'Easy Rider', Franck's 'Born Losers', and Mazursky's 'Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice' all concern themes and situations that could not have reached the screen in past years as legitimate commercial film material" (1971, pp. 74-75). This new material increased the scope of movie-making, lending an aura of sophistication and realism that was lacking in earlier movies bound by the moral code imposed by the Hays office. The restrictive nature of the code was relaxed somewhat in the latter fifties as another competitive weapon against television, but it was not until 1968 that the old code was dropped. A new system of classification was devised which opened the American film industry to new creative vistas, allowing them to deal with any subject. The increased importation of the more sophisticated European films openly challenged American production bound by the old censorship system.

This new system, familiar to movie-goers today, was organized by the Motion Picture Association of America in conjunction with the National Association of Theatre Owners. While being advanced as an effective means of protecting American moral standards, in actuality, it allowed the movie-makers a far greater latitude in the types of actions which could be put on film. The classification system (G, PG, R, X) is widely accepted and recognized throughout the United States, and has ultimately become a form of advertising itself.<sup>7</sup> Each movie is rated as to its subject matter and content. That is, the amount of violence, nudity, profane language, etc., increases as the rating progresses from G to X. With the increasingly sophisticated, or perhaps blase, audiences going to movies today there are those who feel a G rating actually hurts a movie's chances for financial success. Kuhns explains the dominant reason behind this observation: "As

the sixties progressed, the studios discovered that well over 70 percent of the country's movie-goers were of high school or college age. The old idea of the 'family movie' seemed defunct" (1972, p. 220).

Even as the industry was expanding itself creatively through innovative independent production, increased location shooting, expanded ranges of subject matter, as well as technical advances such as split screens, zoom lens, long telephoto shots and the freeze frame, an old Hollywood tradition was dying out. The star system of Hollywood, perhaps the most glamorous aspect of the movie industry, had been sick for some time, and the fifties probably were the last great years of the star. Kuhns writes:

In the sixties, the star system suffered its heaviest blows. The system had gone from a means of promoting movies to the central determining factor of every major movie. Suddenly, in the sixties, it backfired. Movies with stars regarded as major box-office attractions--such as Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Sidney Potier, Paul Newman and Marlon Brando--often failed to make money. Movies that did make big money generally featured names that the public had never heard before: Dustin Hoffman in "The Graduate", Dennis Hopper in "Easy Rider" (1972, p. 221).

Nevertheless, Hollywood continues to publicize its stars. Why is this?

A statement made by Houston is commonly heard even today: "Producers nowadays repeatedly grumble that there are only about half a dozen surviving stars who really count at the box-office, and that these are pricing themselves out of the market" (1963, p. 77). Yet, none of the big-name stars have priced themselves out of the market. Repeatedly, one sees stars, such as Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson, and Jane Fonda, receiving extravagantly large amounts of money for their work. While everyone realizes that there are no guarantees for success, the presence of well-known names in a movie cast are advantageous to some success. Obviously, the public continues to respond to the star system. Certainly, there are stars today,

names everyone knows, and, it is likely that there will always be stars. The public creates them and they are the industry's most formidable advertising weapon. "Who's in it?" is often the first question asked about any particular movie. Of course, stars no longer make the movie. Star-studded casts can no longer make an essentially bad movie a success. Star names may pull in good initial audiences, but the appeal of the film is what makes or breaks it financially. Once again, the public is responsible.

Why then do they create stars on the one hand and reject them on the other? Quite simply, stars are created by being in popular movies. Whether due to the stars' individual talents, or to the movies' own inherent superiority or to a combination of both, the movie has attracted large numbers of people thus shedding the glory of its success onto the stars. Equally simple, however, the movie may be poor, and despite the stars' best efforts, nothing could save it. The fact that these movies are now rejected by the public is, most assuredly, an indication of their increased sophistication in appraising films.<sup>8</sup>

Creatively, as well as financially, the loss of the star system was beneficial to the industry. Stars were no longer bound indefinitely to any one studio, thus freeing them to pick and choose material best suited to their talents and careers. Conversely, the studios no longer had the costly burden of maintaining its stable of stars, and were free to match talent with the proper film.

The end of the star system of old was just part of another trend in the industry that actually started back in the thirties with the establishment of the United Artists Corporation. Studio control of production had been eroding since the war, and in the sixties it had almost vanished.

Location shooting, independent producer/directors, the rising costs of production, all these induced the studios to get out of direct production. It was far more sound financially to simply bankroll an independent production. Still, the Hollywood studios were not economically in good shape, and were gradually being taken over by larger industrial complexes looking to diversify.

Speaking in general terms, the end of the studio system should have been beneficial to the creative atmosphere of Hollywood. However, the fading of the studio system also meant the dying out of the old-style studio managers who were being replaced by "men better fitted to the organizational and 'factory' demands of a studio" (Kuhns, 1972, p. 221). Perhaps reflecting the policies of the large industrial complexes now in control, the new managers were trained in law, banking, or business rather than in movies. The studios became more conservative, more trend conscious, still relying on the expensive spectacles to draw back a dwindling audience. "Musical spectacles ('Hello Dolly', 'Paint Your Wagon'), historical spectacles ('Cleopatra'), war spectacles ('Tora! Tora! Tora!', 'Catch 22'), and spectacles of every ilk, cost the studios upwards of \$10 million apiece . . ." (Kuhns, 1972, p. 219). "Yet," as Houston notes, "the very expensive film, with rare exceptions, has managed to justify itself at the box-office, as indeed it must do. One of the laws of film-making has been that if you can afford to spend enough, you ought to be able to get it back again" (1963, p. 221).

Kuhns contends that during the sixties "movies lost the excitement, the audacity, the delight they promised so often previously" (1972, p. 221). It is also true, as Dickinson states, that " . . . from this climate we have

in fifteen years sporadically seen fine freer films made by artists using the modern versatile tools, films in which expanding techniques have been used to transmute more of the intricacies of day-to-day life on to the cinema screens than have been achieved before" (1971, p. 135).

As these two conflicting statements illustrate, the movie industry, heading into the seventies was undergoing many transitions resulting in an almost dual personality. On the one hand are the mass-entertainment movies, made at huge cost for mass audiences, and on the other the small-scale film which leaves the majority audience, as Houston puts it, "lagging behind" (1963, p. 193).

A statement by Dickinson sums up the state of cinematic art quite well:

During the 1960's the situation of cinema sharply divided the mean-minded from the generous. For the mean, it was a time when attendance at circuit cinemas and consequently the number of these cinemas continued to decline. For the generous, it was the time when the art house and the cine-club movements spread all over the world and when the numbers of non-conformist film-makers proliferated to a degree unforeseen before . . . For the mean, Hollywood, and therefore the film in general, declined with the closing of studios and the brash intrusion of television, while for the generous the film was developing beyond the need for the artifice of studios and into the possibility of working in surroundings formerly inaccessible. For the mean, the commerce of cinema was becoming more exacting, demanding higher standards of intelligence and education than the old brigade possess. For the generous, the cinema was coming of age, a challenge no longer beneath the dignity of the fine and performing arts which are older by so many thousands of years (1971, p. 121).

The promise of earlier years did not blossom in the seventies into a creative and thriving movie industry. The studios continued to use essentially the same strategies utilized in the sixties: that is, the reliance on a major hit or two per year thus insuring their continued survival. The



decade of the seventies has been primarily a genre film period. The disaster film was in vogue for a few years, followed by science fiction and now the horror, or perhaps better classified as the gruesome, film. The "bandwagon" approach of the sixties is still very much alive, enhanced by major multi-media marketing campaigns.

Of course, there have been major forward steps taken by individual creative talents. During the seventies, the film directors have become the new stars of the movie industry. Such men as Altman, Allen, Coppola, Friedkin, and Forman have advanced every aspect of film-making from technical expertise to artistic freedom, and it is to the studios' credit that such men are permitted to produce works of such outstanding merit as "Nashville", "Annie Hall", "The Godfather", "The French Connection", and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest".

It is even more noteworthy that films of such specialized nature could be produced in an industry dominated by a fiscal conservatism. Inflation, once a friend to the movies through its tendency to create an escapist audience, is taking its toll in the industry now. Rising production costs and skyrocketing marketing costs have dampened the creative moods of studio heads; and rising ticket prices have shortened the box-office lines. Alan Ladd, Jr., formerly the head of Twentieth Century-Fox contends that "because prices have escalated so enormously, you can't afford to take the chances you once could" (Is Hollywood making the right kind of movies, 1980, p. 62). Larry Berkowitz explains the increasing production costs:

There are two closely related key reasons for spiraling film production costs.

The first is that producers now have more new markets, besides domestic theatrical distribution, in which to sell

their product,<sup>9</sup> and can generally recoup their negative costs from these markets before the cameras ever roll.

Secondly, producers are aware that a 'blockbuster' picture can generate revenue in the hundreds of millions of dollars. They are willing to spend whatever they believe it takes to create the 'blockbuster'.

The producer's desire to 'go for broke' to insure the economic success of his product, leads him to pay more and more for the 'bankable' talents available. As a result, 'above-the-line' (i.e., creative elements) now represent approximately 60 percent of the negative cost of a major motion picture.

Given the rapidly increasing outlays for above-the-line or creative elements, and with below-the-line elements becoming more expensive through sheer inflation, one begins to understand why film costs have increased at such a volatile rate over the last few years (1980, p. 9).

Naturally, increased production costs have decreased production. As Table 1 illustrates, production has steadily decreased during the seventies, with the exception of a slight rise in 1979.

TABLE 1

Number of Motion Pictures Released by National Distributors

<u>Year</u>	<u>New</u>	<u>Re-Issue</u>	<u>Total</u>
1970	267	39	306
1971	281	32	313
1972	273	39	312
1973	229	38	267
1974	223	45	268
1975	177	38	215
1976	177	29	206
1977	154	32	186
1978	178	21	199
1979	189	26	215

Source: 1980 Encyclopedia of Exhibition, p. 38

To take up the slack in production, independent film production proliferated. Of course, most of these independent production companies were and are affiliated with one of the major distribution companies (i.e., United Artists, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, Universal, and Columbia). This thriving independent production has meant both more product and also a more diversified product. Perhaps, more significantly, it has also acted as a training ground for new talent and as a forum for new or controversial material. These independents have produced such films as "Coming Home", "Looking for Mr. Goodbar", "The Serpent's Egg", and "The Turning Point".

So, on the one hand, the major studios are seeking the "blockbuster" capable of grossing huge sums of money, and on the other hand, the independents, certainly interested in a "blockbuster", are entirely capable of turning a profit from much more modest successes.

The industry as a whole, however, has continued to expand. Jack Valenti, president of the M.P.A.A., reported that "U. S. theatres in 1979 grossed an all-time high of \$2,621.3 million, up 6.7 percent over 1978" (1980, p. 14). Even attendance has generally increased, as shown in Table 2.

Movies, as a form of entertainment, even while there were those decrying the nature of the movies being made and the future of the industry in general, shows distinct signs of making a come-back in the entertainment industry. Table 3, although more involved, is more illuminating. As can be seen, admissions consistently increased until 1947. Reflecting the advent of television at that time, admissions plummeted until 1954 when a slight increase occurred for the next three years, perhaps in

TABLE 2  
Motion Picture Theatres Box-Office Attendance

Year	Admissions (Millions)	Percent Change from Previous Period
1970	920.6	
1971	820.3	- 10.90
1972	934.1	+ 13.87
1973	864.6	- 7.44
1974	1,010.7	+ 16.90
1975	1,032.8	+ 2.19
1976	957.1	- 7.33
1977	1,063.2	+ 11.09
1978	1,128.2	+ 6.11
1979	1,120.9	- .90

Source: Motion Picture Association of America, Inc.  
Reprinted in 1980 Encyclopedia of Exhibition, p. 37.

response to the technical innovations of the period. From 1957 to 1964 admissions continued to increase, but how much of this increase can be attributed to increased numbers is questionable. Certainly, rising ticket prices must account for much of the increase.<sup>10</sup> Then too, as shown in Table 3, admissions to movies as a percentage of total spectator amusement expenditures continued to fall even with the admission increase in 1964. It is not until 1969 that this percentage figure began to increase and has gradually continued to do so. This is certainly an encouraging sign for the movie industry.

As encouraging as these figures are, however, more recent statistics indicate that the industry may be headed for bad times. Valenti reports,

TABLE 3  
THEATRE GROSSES, 1938-1977  
U. S. Box-Office Receipts in Relation to Personal Consumption Expenditure

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Admission to movie theatres (million \$) . . .	663	659	735	809	1,022	1,275	1,341	1,450	1,692	1,594
% of total personal consumption expenditures . . . . .	1.04	0.99	1.04	1.00	1.15	1.28	1.24	1.21	1.18	0.99
% of total recreation expenditures . . . . .	20.46	19.09	19.54	19.08	21.85	25.70	24.73	23.62	19.81	17.23
% of total spectator amusement expenditures . . . . .	81.25	80.27	81.31	81.31	84.88	87.63	85.80	84.60	81.90	79.58
Admission to movie theatres (millions \$) . . .	1,506	1,451	1,376	1,310	1,246	1,187	1,228	1,326	1,394	1,126
% of total personal consumption expenditures . . . . .	0.87	0.82	0.72	0.64	0.58	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.40
% of total recreation expenditures . . . . .	15.54	14.50	12.34	11.33	10.30	9.33	9.39	9.42	9.31	7.43
% of total spectator amusement expenditures . . . . .	78.52	77.51	77.26	76.34	75.29	73.96	73.44	73.63	72.41	68.04
Admission to movie theatres (million \$) . . .	992	958	951	921	903	904	913	927	964	989
% of total personal consumption expenditures . . . . .	0.34	0.31	0.29	0.27	0.25	0.24	0.23	0.21	0.23	0.22
% of total recreation expenditures . . . . .	6.27	5.51	5.20	4.72	4.41	4.07	3.71	3.51	3.34	3.20
% of total spectator amusement expenditures . . . . .	64.50	60.98	59.22	56.68	54.86	53.43	51.81	51.19	50.13	48.79
Admission to movie theatres (million \$) . . .	1,045	1,099	1,162	1,170	1,644	1,965	2,495	2,548	2,987	3,200
% of total personal consumption expenditures . . . . .	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.22	0.20	0.28	0.26	0.27	--
% of total recreation expenditures . . . . .	3.11	2.98	2.86	2.74	3.03	3.50	4.10	3.84	4.12	--
% of total spectator amusement expenditures . . . . .	46.71	48.59	48.00	47.74	47.01	50.77	53.99	51.81	53.36	--

SOURCE: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Office of Business Economics, National Income Division (latest revisions included)

"The movie theatre box-office gross in 1980 of \$2.8 billion was lower by 3 percent than 1979, and admissions were down about 9 percent, to 1.02 billion" (1981, p. 22). This decrease may be a harbinger of a new transition point for the film industry. Once again, the studios are facing rising costs, falling grosses, and new technology (cable and pay T.V., and home-video). "The next few years will be survival years. The ones without a strong financial structure will fold" (Film 'survival' years ahead, 1981, p. 46).

Viewing past history, the future of the movie industry may be predicted. Indeed, much of the past is being relived already. The studios are exerting increased control over production. Production and marketing costs are being trimmed by tighter budgeting and controls, tougher bargaining with higher priced talent and fewer productions. Along with fewer productions, there will be less creative experimentation. "You won't be able to take a chance on a subject that may be marginal," Alan Ladd, Jr. states, "The very interesting pictures won't be made because the cost has doubled and it won't be worth the effort" (Film 'survival' years ahead, 1981, p. 46). The importance of the director will diminish as his hands are increasingly tied by the studio. Michael Camino's over-budgeted failure, "Heaven's Gate", has already provoked words of protest. Frank Price, president of Columbia pictures has stated, "I wouldn't give any director carte blanche" (Film 'survival' years ahead, 1981, p. 46). Movies will be based on pre-sold ideas. Already we've seen "Superman" and "Popeye" and an abundance of relatively low-budgeted horror films. The studios will entrench themselves within the old ideas and the proven methods until this new crisis is over, meanwhile searching for some new

form of technology to draw the people into the theatres. One new process called Stereospace, an improved form of 3-D, has been unveiled by United Artists and is directed towards that end. It is being heralded as the movies answer to home-video.

Undoubtedly, the movies will survive, for its history is full of ups and downs and crises. The lively competition between the creative impulse on the one hand, and the financial imperatives on the other have kept the industry vital and amenable to change. There are many factors which become involved in the making of movies. Dickinson finds four: "The first is the political and social climate affecting the nature of the film itself; the second the creative capacity of the artist, and the number of these artists; third, the flexibility of film experiment; and fourth, the audience." Of all these factors, however, "the audience is the key to the possibility of the expansion of range open to the artist" (1971, p. 137).

## Notes for Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> Sound was a major step forward in the development of the cinema. But this was not to be achieved for quite a few years. This is a case of an economic crisis, the dwindling audiences, bringing about a technical change which would ultimately add to the creative quality of the cinema.

<sup>2</sup> This alternative is quite obviously still in use as evidenced by the recent withdrawal from release of Camino's "Heaven's Gate". It is likely to be re-released after extensive editing.

<sup>3</sup> One must remember that this statement was made in 1923. Hollywood was in its prime. The "Hays Office" and general public pressure would soon force a conservative mood on Hollywood productions. Attendance would decline until the introduction of sound in 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Hollywood's "bandwagon" tendency to fully exploit popular themes as well as the factory system of production are results, or causes depending upon where you are looking from, of these stereotypical films.

<sup>5</sup> This alternative method of building audiences was also influenced by World War II. Not only had the directors and producers been through the soul-searching that war may produce, the audiences had also been through this trying period. The old style movies simply were no longer attractive. This was brought home to the studios by Europe's rejection of American imports after the war. It was imagined that Europe, deprived of the Hollywood product, was anxiously awaiting American films. This was not the case, Hollywood's backlog of films was coldly received.

<sup>6</sup> Many productions were moved overseas due to the lower production costs available. These "runaway" productions were greatly resented by the cinematic labor unions; for the studios, however, the move was financially necessary. It had the added benefit of opening new horizons in film-making through exposure to foreign methods as well as the availability of more exotic locales.

<sup>7</sup> The 1979 Motion Picture Almanac reports that 87.5 percent of the movie-goers are aware of the M.P.A.A. film rating system.

<sup>8</sup> The 1979 Motion Picture Almanac states that only 30 percent of the movie-goers consider stars as important in deciding what to see.



<sup>9</sup> Emile Buyse, in his article "We Make Good Foreign Movies" (1981), reports that feature film rentals outside the United States reached a new peak of \$909,400,000.00, an improvement of nearly ten percent over 1978. U. S. films are getting increasingly popular on an international scale. Additional markets are found in pay cable and free television as well as videodiscs and cassettes (Orear, 1980, p. 39).

<sup>10</sup> In 1948 the average admission price was \$0.36. Price hikes were fairly moderate for a number of years and by 1963 the average price was \$0.86. From 1963 to 1979 prices escalated more rapidly, resulting in the average admission price of \$2.47 in 1979 (Encyclopedia of Exhibition, 1980, p. 42).

## Chapter II

### THE AUDIENCE

The term individual is of major importance when considering the motion picture audience. After all, one must remember that an audience is nothing more than an aggregate of individuals brought together in one place. It is this fact that so often troubles the film-maker. While films are designed to appeal to majorities, there are only individuals watching it. Mark Flanders points out that ". . . film is different from other aesthetic products in that it can serve a mass audience as easily as it can serve an audience of one" (1977, p. 161). White and Averson also recognize the significance of the individual:

But we cannot emphasize too much that there is no such entity as a mass audience of 40 or 50,000,000 people who, to these communicators must always remain nameless faceless, abstractions. In reality, there are 40 to 50,000,000 distinct individuals each with his own personality, ambitions, and expectations. These individuals exist on the other side of the theatre or television screen; only by an occasional letter of praise or damnation does the mass communicator become aware of the private identities (1968, pp. 15-16).

It is, of course, impossible for the film-makers to know each individual or try to please him. Thus, the importance placed on the mass audience. "Hollywood's concern," Fadiman contends, "seems to be only in the audience response to its productions not in the reasons for that response" (1972, pp. 13-14). Indeed, how could it be otherwise? In dealing with such large masses of people the movie-makers must content themselves

with the large-scale response. The individual response is impossible to know and too varied to be relevant. This dependence on the mass response is what creates the "bandwagon" effect mentioned earlier. Of course, each movie is evaluated prior to production as to its appeal to the public. But once a film has become a financial success, similar films, capitalizing on the earlier films' successes, will be made due to the mass response from the public.

Even when dealing with the audience on a large-scale the film-makers still gamble with every film they produce. While they know in general who goes to the movies, they cannot know as a certainty how the film will be received. Fadiman agrees: "The audience's potential response to a film is an unknown and always will be, surveys, polls, and analyses to the contrary" (1972, p. 14). Certainly what may be popular can be predicted with a fair degree of accuracy. If not, the movie industry could not stay in business.

The industry's reliance on the youth market for simple survival continues to be obvious. The current popularity of the horror film is an appropriate example. Linda Marsa, in her article "Horror On-Screen", illustrates this situation with a quote by Ed Mintz, president of Cinema Score:

The key is to get as much as you can of the right audience, the young working class crowd or high school and college students, with characters and situations they can relate to. Hence the success of movies with terrified babysitters ("When a Stranger Calls", "The Fog", "Halloween), fear crazed summer campers ("Friday the 13th") or terrorized high school students ("Prom Night", "Carrie") ( Marsa, 1981, p. 10).

But every studio still hopes for that "blockbuster" film which appeals across-the-board. As Bob Rehme, president of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.,

states: "If a picture lacks 'youth market' appeal, it either has to be very good or very special" (Rehme, 1981, p. 21).

Still, the individual plays too large a role in audience response to allow any movie to be a sure-thing from the very beginning. Individuals make up the masses and the masses make mass culture, and as Amos Vogel points out: "While today's art can incorporate all aspects of mass culture, mass culture continues nonetheless to pursue its independent existence" (Vogel, 1967, p. 105).

So, what do the film-makers know about their audience? What statistical facts do they use to make their predictions? As early as 1923 Tamar Lane noticed the need for more information about the movie-going public: "The public which formerly went haphazardly to the movies is today somewhat more discriminating and goes shopping for its cinema entertainment instead of taking whatever its favorite theatre has to offer" (1923, p. 99). Rather than trying to maintain a large, across-the-board audience, the studios endeavor to please the smaller section of the public which they find to be consistent movie-goers. This move is not difficult to understand in light of the industry's history of financial conservatism. When faced with a crisis, such as declining attendance, the industry's reflex reaction is to go with the sure-thing. The result, however, as Gilbert Seldes pointed out in 1950 was that ". . . during the past five years statistical research, paid for by the studios, has provided exact figures proving that in one generation the movies has lost two-thirds of their customers and have survived only because a satisfactory birth rate provides new patrons for the seats left empty when people arrive at the years of discretion and stop going to the movies" (1950, p. 9).

Again and again one runs across terms such as "the years of discretion", used here to indicate that movie-goers are predominantly young people. In 1950 Seldes wrote: "One fact is established: after they reach the age of twenty or so, people go less and less to the movies. The movies live on children from the ages of ten to 19, who go steadily and frequently and almost automatically to the pictures; from the ages of 20 to 25 people still go, but less often; after 30, the audience begins to vanish from the movie houses" (1950, p. 12).

In 1972 Fadiman called it "the new, young audience". He went on to say that "62 percent of all movie-goers are between 12 and 30 years of age" (1972, p. 14). The most recent statistics reported by Jack Valenti lead him to state: "Today the age group 12 to 39 is the largest segment of the movie audience, accounting for 76 percent of total yearly admissions" (1980, p. 15).

What is interesting to note here is the increasing ages in each successive survey. Apparently, movie attendance is related to the "baby boom" generation mentioned earlier. Indeed, demographic studies reported by Valenti tend to confirm this: "The fastest growing population group will be between the ages 25 and 49, which makes up 30 percent of today's admissions. This group will constitute 87 percent of the increase in the population by 1990 and this will become an essential target for the movie audience during the coming decade" (1980, p. 15). Valenti, in another article, reports more supportive data for this observation: "The 1980 demographic survey confirms that 74 percent of the movie admissions were by those 18 years and over, while teenage admissions dropped from one-third of the admissions in 1979 to one-fourth of the admissions in 1980. Thus,

teenage population will be decreasing even as teenage admissions are lessening" (1981, p. 46).

Obviously, movie-goers are getting older. This fact, in combination with continued increases in over-all movie attendance, suggest that the youth market, while still important, will no longer be the mainstay of the movie industry. Then too, the increasing age of the movie-goer suggests that movies today are of an increasingly mature appeal. Dickinson contends that this older public "choose[s] their films from reviews or by word of mouth, they are no longer a passive audience" (1971, p. 137). They take a more active part in the movies they see and base their selection on a more knowledgeable basis of what the film is and how it will appeal to them.

Consequently, each film is more difficult and more costly to sell to the public. The fact that movie-goers are older and more discriminating may account, in some measure, for the increase in movie hype so prevalent today.

Another indication of a more mature movie audience is their apparently increasing levels of education. Recent statistics indicate that movie-going continues to increase with higher educational levels (see Table 4).

Corroborative statistics were reported in U. S. News and World Report: "Sixty-four percent of the movie-goers with at least one year of college go the movies frequently or occasionally; 50 percent of those with a high school education; 25 percent of those without a high school education attend regularly; and 63 percent without a high school degree never go to the movies" (New 'great era' for movies, 1975, p. 53). Edward

TABLE 4  
Education and Frequency of Movie Attendance  
(In Percentages)

	<u>Less than H. S.</u>			<u>H. S. Completed</u>			<u>College</u>		
Frequent . . . .	14	12	11	22	25	24	35	29	36
Occasional . . .	12	11	13	27	28	29	30	32	30
Infrequent . . .	11	14	12	22	16	16	10	15	13
Never . . . . .	63	64	64	29	32	31	25	24	21

Source: 1979 Motion Picture Almanac, p. 32A.

Murray agrees with these general findings noting that: "The audience for motion pictures is more educated now than in the past. It has been estimated that prior to grammar school a young person spends 3,500 hours before the television screen, and that by the time he graduates high school a typical teenager has seen 500 movies" (1975, p. 2). Valenti writes: "We know from our researches that 64 percent of Americans of higher education are frequent or occasional movie-goers. By 1990, some 30 million persons age 25 and over will have had four years of college educational attainment. Here another prime audience beckons to us" (1980, p. 15).

Today, the movie-going public is for the most part younger than the general population and more educated. This fact has two immediate consequences for the movie producers. First, as Fadiman points out, "The major problem confronting Hollywood is the persistent reduction in the quantity of its patrons. In 1969 15 million Americans went to the movies weekly

as against 87 million in 1957" (1972, p. 11). "A good part of this defection from the movie houses", Seldes contends, "is explained by the gradual maturing of the audience" (1950, p. 22). That is, due to the movie-makers' persistence in appealing to their, at present, largest market, they are limiting their overall market simply because people have a tendency to out-grow the movies. Therefore, it is no wonder that, as Seldes also points out, ". . . every inquiry into the reasons why people go less frequently to the movies brings the same answer: there aren't as many good movies as there used to be . . . Thirty percent of those who still go to the movies gave this reason" (1950, p. 43).

As the individual matures, his attachment to the youth culture diminishes and the current movies, predominantly directed toward a younger market, lose their appeal. If the movie industry continues to rely so heavily on the youth trade, their business is likely to suffer even worse and more enduring setbacks than those prompted by past crises. As had been shown, the sheer numbers of young people are declining. While it is still true that it is the young people who most often look for out-of-the-house diversions, it is also true that unless movies begin to attract audiences from the dominant age groups in the country their receipts will decline in pace with the diminishing numbers of teenagers. In the past, as Albert E. Sindlinger states: "The movies held on to their younger audience and to their own survival by varying their fare" (1981, p. 9). At the present time, it would seem appropriate for the movie-makers to once again begin varying their fare. In light of the present, rather dismal, conditions prompted by in-home video technology and rising production costs, changes are not likely to be seen for a number of years.



The initial fight for survival will most likely be met not with change, but with conservatism and a hanging on to old ideas in an attempt to maintain their present audience.

The second consequence, although seemingly contradictory to the first, is that as one report states, "pictures coming out now are much more sophisticated than they used to be, by and large. The reason is that audiences are better educated and demand much more" (New 'great era' for movies, 1975, p. 53). This same report goes on to state that "there is widespread agreement that despite reawakened interest in old art forms, films from now on will generally be sharper edged and less innocent than in the past--reflecting a maturing of Americans in recent wars, political scandals and economic troubles" (1975, p. 53). In their attempt to keep up with their more educated market, the movie-makers are producing films of a seemingly higher quality. In the early days of the cinema, people would go to see anything. As the public becomes more educated and more sophisticated they also become more selective. Thus, people no longer go to the movies, they go to a movie.

The make-up of the movie audience has been described and explained quite clearly by Stanley Kauffman:

Film is the art for which there is the greatest spontaneous appetite in America at present . . . It must be clear that this is not to say that it is the art practiced at the highest level in this country . . . But observation and experience of others, make me believe that this uniquely responsive audience exists. Or, in another phrase, there exists a film generation: the first generation that has matured in a culture in which the film has been of accepted serious relevance, however that seriousness is defined. Before 1935 films were proportionately more popular than they are now, but for the huge majority of film-goers they represented a regular weekly or semi-weekly bath of escapism. Such an escapist audience still exists in large number, but

another audience, most of them born since 1935, exists along with it. This group, this film generation, is certainly not exclusively grim, but it is essentially serious. Even its appreciations of sheer entertainment films reflect an overall serious view (Kauffman, 1966, p. 415).

Of course, the movie audience is affected by the times, the mood of the country. Politics, economics, moral standards, the general prevailing mood of the populace all influence what type of movies are being made. The current popularity of horror films is a case in point. Joseph Ackerman, who has helped produce over 100 horror movies, attributes the upsurge in this type of movie to the "uncertainty of the world". He goes on to say that, "these kinds of movies allow you to vicariously experience your fears so they won't be quite so threatening" (Marsa, 1981, p. 10). Actually, the unsettling events he refers to, Vietnam and Watergate, were more characteristic of the earlier, more serious, period of the late sixties and early seventies. It is, in fact, difficult to recognize any genre which was proportionately more successful than any other during this time.

Times have been settling out as the seventies progressed. Political fervor has diminished. There are no common causes to rally around. In light of this, Jamie Lee Curtis, star of "Halloween", "The Fog", and "Terror Train", may be more accurate in explaining the current popularity of the horror film: "In every other era, things were happening and people had figures they could look up to. What has the '70's given us? Disco? It's been a very floundering and boring time. Watching people running from danger negates some of the apathy, even if it's only for 90 minutes" (Marsa, 1981, p. 10).

The economy, however, has been anything but apathetic. Inflation continues unabated holding everything and everyone in its fluctuating grip.

In the past, during recessionary times people have responded by going to the movies more often, seeking what was still relatively inexpensive entertainment for a night out. Inflation, unfortunately, has also affected theatre ticket prices and it is entirely possible that the consumer may find \$3.00, \$4.00, and \$5.00 too much to pay.

Phillip Lowe, in his article "The Movie Industry of the 80's . . . Mass or Class", notes the lower attendance rates during January to June 1980 over the same period of 1979 (a decrease of 6.71 percent from 557.4 millions to 520 millions) and speculates that: "The 1980's mean that movie theatre-owners, like legitimate theatre-owners, will serve the class, not the mass. It may be more realistic to accept the position of movie theatres as selective, more occasional social gathering places where fewer, but more affluent, viewers are charged higher prices to produce required profits" (Lowe, 1980, p. 23).

Whatever the future may bring, the current literature suggests that today's movie-going audience is more sophisticated, more educated, and certainly more experienced with the nature of films, than ever before, and thus potentially more selective. James Agee, a film critic, once hoped that "an audience that comes to know new and better things may come to like them as well as the trash they are now enjoying" (Flanders, 1977, p. 164). The movie-going audience today may well be the agents for Agee's aspirations.

### Chapter III

#### THE CRITIC

"Nobody liked it but the public" (Altshuler & Janaro, 1967, p. 143). This phrase, and others similar to it have been heard time and again in reference to the movies. It calls into question the connection between the movie critic and the public. It is, of course, very easy to dismiss the opinions of professional critics. They are merely individuals, after all, and with a product as widely consumed as movies, the popular belief is that one person's opinion is as good as another's. This sentiment, however, is not particularly well founded. The critic's opinion is based on education and experience and may, therefore, be worthy of more consideration than the opinions of the average movie-goer. "The problem is," as Richard Shickel points out, that, "people who don't know the first thing about the principles or functions of criticism are suddenly reading the stuff with new interest because it is now more widely available than ever before and because it is being written about a subject that everyone knows something about and which is wildly fashionable--the movies" (Schickel, 1970, p. 99).

Everyone thinks he's a critic, and, in a way he is. An individual's opinion is, of course, relevant to him, but no one is truly representative of anyone else. It is here that a considerable amount of confusion surrounds the role of the critic. The critic is not attempting to say what the public

will like, he is trying to persuade the public toward a movie, which in the critic's opinion, the public should like. Naturally, this position has its detractors. The director Mervyn Le Roy contends that "as for movies just for the intelligentsia, these so-called critic's pictures rarely make money, and I'll tell you why. Anyone who makes a picture for a critic is out of his mind. A critic isn't representative" (Thomson, 1977, pp. 118-119).

Thus, one would expect to see very little agreement between the public and the critic; and, in the past this very probably could have been true. While the public generally ignored the critic, the critic in turn looked with disdain upon the public. Mark Flanders describes how James Agee, an important movie critic of his time, viewed the movie-going public: "Agee had very mixed feelings--some quite passionate--about audiences. He often talks about the large mass of people who see (or did, at least in his day) nearly every Hollywood film. He compares this group with the 'lusty, semi-literate mass audience' of Shakespeare's day" (1977, p. 162). This mass response has been noted in more recent times by Andrew Tudor: "Having observed the widespread popularity of the cinema, negatively disposed critics tried to contend with it in terms of audience uniformity. Having correctly observed that many popular movies were basically uncomplicated, they went on to assume that the audience must be responding unselectively to this simple stimulus. Popular culture thus became mass culture" (Tudor, 1974, p. 74).

This view of the public as uncomplicated and illiterate has held sway for quite some time. It, however, underrates the public. In the past, it was very probably true that the public responded "unselectively"

to the movies. But today, as Tudor goes on to point out, "he (a member of the audience) is not brainwashed as some critics of popular culture like to suggest. Like everyone else, he uses cultures as part of the fabric of his social life" (1974, p. 75). The movies, after all, are entertainment, and entertainment can take many forms. As Renata Adler writes, ". . . most people know in broad terms what kind of movies they like, it only takes describing the thing to suggest, regardless of whether the reviewer endorses the movie or not, whether the reader is going to go" (Adler, 1971, p. 258).

While in general terms the above statement is true, once again the movie-goers are increasingly better educated and more often exposed to critical reviews. A statement by Edward Murray is more likely the truer representation of the relationship between the reviewer and the public:

In meeting the challenge of contemporary films, critics have developed a more sophisticated and more complex approach to their subject matter. The average reviewer of the past could satisfy his readers with a recounting of a film's plot and an unsupported 'I liked it' or 'I didn't like it' evaluation. This approach is still in use, but the practice has become increasingly untenable (1975, p. 2).

Gilbert Seldes formulated an interesting theory. He contends: "If it is true that the critics are more intelligent and more demanding than the average movie-goer, there is a chance that they will represent the attitude of the people who have stopped going" (1950, p. 45). There is little doubt that a critic is more educated (his job is based on literary skills) and more demanding (his business is movies) than the average movie-goer. This is as true today as it was in 1950 when Seldes made the preceding statement. Seldes' contention implies that there was, in all likelihood, little agreement between critical and audience opinion. It

should be stressed, however, that this was over thirty years ago, and if the movie audiences have become better educated and more sophisticated concerning their movie fare, then it may be speculated that the amount of agreement between the movie-going public and the professional critic has risen.

"Anyone can be a film critic," writes Francois Truffaut, "the apprentice need not possess a tenth of the knowledge that would be demanded of a critic of literature, music, or painting" (Truffaut, 1977, p. 95).<sup>1</sup> The critics themselves, of course, dispute this notion. Andrew Sarris, critic for The Village Voice, argues: "They (book reviewers) have a tremendous choice, whereas we as movie reviewers are open to everything that comes out. We're supposed to be authorities on everything . . . There's no single human mind today that can encompass the entire cinema, past, present and future" (Nash, 1975, p. 23).

Even within the rank of professional criticism there is disagreement and in-fighting. Each critic has his own ideas about what a critic should be. Naturally, other critics do not live up to these ideals. Parker Tyler contends: "even the better journalistic reviewers are habitual fakers; they vaunt having the know-how of a thing when actually their gift of the gab has simply succeeded in dominating their professional competition in their own class" (Tyler, 1967, p. 67). Pauline Kael, a well-known film critic, writes: "There is, in any art, a tendency to turn one's own preference into a monomaniac theory; in film criticism, the more confused and single-minded and dedicated the theorist is, the more likely he is to be regarded as serious and important and 'deep'--in contrast to relaxed men of good sense whose pluralistic approaches can be

disregarded as not fundamental enough" (1965, p. 271). . . Richard Schickel, critic for Time magazine, lambasts the modern movie critic: ["What is wanted is 'personalities' in the most egregious sense of the term, fast-gun killers among them--people who fit well on the Johnny Carson or Merv Griffin show" (1970, p. 99).]

Obviously, the critics themselves cannot agree on the qualities that make a critic a good critic, any more than they can agree on the qualities that make a movie a good movie. This does not, however, disqualify their opinions. Differences in opinion are to be expected. These differences do not reflect any deficiencies in skill. Indeed, they represent an abundance of experience and a wider range of theoretical usage. Despite disagreement, most critics would agree with Schickel's statement: "Ideally, and especially if he (a movie critic) is functioning in a mass journal, he should be, I think, a well-informed leader of the theretically endless discussion between artists, commercial interests, and the audience . . . a true critic and not merely a reviewer outlining plots and tacking snappy judgments on them" (1970, p. 99).

Appropriately, ". . . most of the current reviewers and critics come out of a literary or journalistic tradition" (Vogel, 1967, p. 135). Consequently, much of the current film criticism is oriented toward sociology, literature, and psychology. Only in relatively recent years has there been an increase in the use of the more technical and aesthetic concerns over the thematic values just mentioned.

Edward Murray, in discussing Robert Warshow's book, The Immediate Experience (published in 1962), points out that film criticism has been largely of two kinds: aesthetic and sociological (Murray, 1975, p. 26).



Purely to exemplify the extensive nature of critical theory, a brief discussion of these two types of criticism follows. Aesthetic criticism emphasizes "the formal qualities of the medium and the self-consciousness of the film artist. Such criticism is likely to base itself on some fairly clear concept of the 'cinematic' and to use this as a standard of judgment" (Murray, 1975, p. 26). Warshow continues: "It is typical of this criticism to place great stress on matters of technique, to minimize the importance of film actors in favor of directors" (Murray, 1975, p. 26).

Sociological criticism, on the other hand, "either minimizes the aesthetic problem or ignores it altogether, treating the films . . . as indexes to mass psychology or sometimes the folk spirit. Criticism of this sort ranges from the discovery of direct correspondence between the movies and life . . . to the complex and 'deep' interpretations of psycho-analysis" (Murray, 1975, pp. 26-27). The sociological critic is concerned with those elements in a film which affect or express the public rather than with what he himself responds to.

The sociological and aesthetic approaches are just two theories behind film criticism. Edward Murray mentions nine: 1) amateur criticism; 2) sociological criticism; 3) psycho-analytic-mythological criticism; 4) judicial criticism; 5) pluralistic, nonaesthetic criticism; 6) pluralistic, aesthetic criticism; 7) ethnological-aesthetic criticism; 8) auteur criticism; and 9) congenital criticism (1975, p. 41).

Whatever the theory used in criticism, it is generally true that, as Warshow puts it, most critics have "tended to slight the fundamental fact of the movies . . . This is the actual immediate experience of seeing and

responding to the movies as most of us see them and respond to them. A man watches a movie and the critic must acknowledge that he is that man . . . . It must be that I (a film critic) go to the movies for the same reason that the other go: because I require the absorbing immediacy of the screen" (Murray, 1975, pp. 27-28).

There has been, particularly in the past, a tendency for critics to hold themselves aloof from the movie-going masses. There are, today, indications that this is not wholly the case. It would be a mistake, however, to consider this apparent change as a lowering of critical standards to a mass audience level. Rather, it is a new method of reviewing films. Instead of concentrating on technical, aesthetic, or even thematic concerns, this new critical approach looks simply for entertainment values.

The evidence of this new method of film criticism was presented in a study by Won H. Chang. In this typological study, Chang, through factor analysis, separated critics into three types which he labeled elites, auteurists, and entertainers. Briefly, he describes the three types as follows: Type I (elite) critics have a literary flair and are intellectually or artistically oriented. They see movies primarily as expressions of art; Type II (auteurists) critics are also intellectual but not to the degree of Type I. They can look at a film as entertainment as well as art; Type III (entertainers) critics are commercially oriented, both in their criticism and in the manner in which they criticize. They are more unpredictable and idiosyncratic than Types I and II (Chang, 1975, p. 725).

Chang points out that Type III most nearly reflects the attitudes of the movie-going public. Type III includes the relatively new figure of the broadcast critic. These critics are attempting to reach the public,

not only as film critics, but also as entertainers. Thus, much of the seriousness manifested in Types I and II is dropped in favor of wit. }

No matter what type of critic is discussed, one is hard put to measure their influence on the movie-going public. ["In the past," Murray states, "no American film critic was respected as a film critic. The reason for this is simple: film was not, until the late fifties, widely respected as one of the arts in America" (1975, p. 1).] Even today there are those who scoff at film critics. David Slavitt offers one scathing example:

The critic is laughably impotent, has no influence either with the film makers or with the film audiences, has no suitable or adequate vocabulary with which to discuss the films for his putative readers, and, perhaps worst of all, has no position on which to stand, from which to formulate a general theory of what he is trying to do or wants to say, and no way of rationalizing his intellectual career (1967, p. 337).

Most critics of the film critics would not go this far. In fact, even Slavitt relents somewhat allowing for some critical influence on foreign films. Particularly prestigious journalistic papers also have some influence primarily through their elevated position and extensive circulation. Then too, smaller papers look to the major papers to find out what they think of a movie (Slavitt, 1967, p. 339).

A more accurate image of the film critic is provided by Andrew Tudor. He contends: "The film critic occupies a formally defined role as opinion-leader though in practice he may lead no opinions" (1974, p. 89). That is, while a critic is publicly acknowledged as an expert on movies, his opinions may not exert much influence. It is true that the available literature does not represent the critic as a crucial figure in the movie business. But, it is equally clear that he is not without some authority.

Tudor presents some Polish research which claims that the popularity of films, as measured by attendance, is only weakly affected by reviews. There is a tendency, however, for critical opinion to influence the movie-goer's evaluation once a film has been seen. That is, the more educated and the more interested movie-goers adopt views closer to those of the critic (Falewicz, 1964, p. 89).

Tudor makes an interesting point which illustrates the major sphere of critical influence: "It may also be that these more enthusiastic film fans act in turn as opinion-leaders for others, thus allowing for more than the 10 percent critical influence reflected in Falewicz's data" (1974, p. 89). Stephen Farber, in his article, "The Power of the Movie Critics" would agree that while circumscribed the critic's major influence is in "word of mouth", that "innate popular appeal of a movie" (1976, p. 419). Won H. Chang also noted this area of influence: "Word of mouth is the best seller of a movie to the general public and it is in this area where the critic operates" (1975, p. 725).

Many experts would disagree with Chang's evaluation of "word of mouth". Farber contends: "The major element determining the box-office performance of a film is advertising. The reviews certainly could not compete with the publicity machine" (1976, pp. 419-420). However, even in the area of publicity the film critic may have an indirect influence. The critic, by his favorable reviews, may encourage a studio to promote more fully a particular movie.

[Ultimately, the critic's role is one of little power--only general influence.] This influence, however, may be increasing. A study by Michael H. Burgynski and Dewey J. Bayer lends support to the potential effect of

critical reviews. In their study, subjects were exposed to either highly positive views, highly negative views, or no comments from critics posing as legitimate theatre customers via overheard inter-critic conversation. After the film the subjects, using a questionnaire, rated the film. A significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) was found between the positive and negative prior information groups. It was found that prior information may shape a movie-goer's opinion (Burgynski & Bayer, 1977, p. 215). Quite logically, it would follow that as critical reviews become more widely disseminated, their influence will increase.

Already, particularly well-known critics, such as Vincent Canby, Judith Crist, Pauline Kael, Gene Shalit, and Rex Reed, may exert their influence and harm a film's performance if enough of them give it a bad review. It is highly unlikely, however, that a film can be completely destroyed by critical opinion alone, primarily because, as Chang found out, unanimous critical successes or failure are very unlikely (Chang, 1975, p. 722).

Undoubtedly, for many movie-goers the critic may be described as "omniscient if not omnipotent--a final arbiter of excellent" (Schickel, 1970, p. 99). For most, however, the influence of the film critic is more exactly stated by Francois Truffaut: "We think that criticism should play an intermediary role between the artist and the public, and that is sometimes the case. We think that criticism should play a complementary role, and that is sometimes the case. But most of the time, criticism is only one element among others: advertising, the atmosphere, competition, timing" (1977, p. 100).

### Notes for Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Francois Truffaut, a very talented and respected film director, was, at one time, a movie critic.

Chapter IV  
THE WANDERER STUDY AND DUMAZEDIER  
ON MOVIES AND LEISURE

In 1970, Jules J. Wanderer completed a study in which he reports on a secondary analysis of a direct measure of popular tastes and contrasts it with professional evaluations of the same cultural product. That is, drawing from ratings compiled by Consumer's Report for both professional critics and the general public,<sup>1</sup> he compared the two groups in hopes of refuting the alleged "snobbism" of critics.

Wanderer's results show a relatively high degree of agreement between the two groups (53 percent); that is, the two groups rated 53 percent of the movies identically. He views these results as an indication of the social position of the critic and as a refutation of the critic's snobbish stereotype. While his study may certainly place the majority of critics in a particular class, it says very little about the critic's snobbish image.

The major problem in the Wanderer study is the sample. There is nothing wrong with the use of professional ratings as compiled by Consumer's Report.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is a very convenient and efficient means of compiling data from several different sources. The problem in sampling exists in that Wanderer obtained his "lay-audience" ratings from the same source. Each year Consumer's Union (C. U.) solicits volunteers from among

its members to report on and rate the movies they see. Wanderer admits that these volunteers are, in social and economic characteristics, heavily skewed toward the upper-middle class. Thus, the 53 percent agreement found between the critics and the lay-audience justifies Wanderer's contention that professional critics tend to come from upper-middle class background. It does not refute the critics' snobbish image. All that Wanderer has actually accomplished is the placing of the volunteer raters and the professional critics in the same social class. One may reasonably expect to find agreement among members of the same class. If the critics are upper-middle class and the lay sample is upper-middle class, and they agree, how may one tell if the critics are snobs or not?

Wanderer was mistaken in rejecting box-office attendance as an indicator of popularity. He maintains that attendance is "largely inadequate, since merely attending a movie . . . is not tantamount to appreciating it" (1970, p. 263). Gilbert Seldes would agree with Wanderer's contention: "Actually the ratings [or box-office] do not measure popularity. They measure preferences only--between available and competing program [or movies]" (1968, p. 38). Surely preference may be seen as a form of popularity, just as surely as a movie attracting large numbers of people can be seen as a popular movie. Moreover, Seldes was referring primarily to television, and the movie box-office, involving an expenditure by the consumer, may be a more reliable indicator of popularity. Ian Jarvie states: "In a market place people vote at the cash register. Movies, like bread, are cheap and therefore the box-office should not be maligned as an approximate indicator of public taste . . . especially as there is already a wide range of choices in the market" (1969, pp. 212-213). Then



too, the use of box-office attendance records would make a better sample as it draws upon a wider range of people than a limiting study such as Wanderer's.

Wanderer bases much of his study upon Herbert J. Gans' theory of "taste culture". "Taste culture" is defined in the following statement: "The diversity of information, art, and entertainment, and the diverse standards by which people choose from them, are organized into taste sub-cultures. Each taste culture serves its own 'taste public', people who consider the content of that culture desirable" (Wanderer, 1970, p. 264). Gans places the critic in the upper-middle taste public and, as Wanderer points out, "as a member of that taste public, the critic can be expected to share the tastes of that public and can be expected to find the same cultural products desirable" (1970, p. 264). Both Gans and Wanderer feel that simply because a critic is a member of a specific taste public, he cannot be defined as a snob. It would seem more likely, however, that the preferences of one public when compared to the preferences of another public are a truer definition of snobbism.

The issues of snobbism, while interesting, is not particularly important in the present study. The Wanderer study is important in that it is the only study which deals with the basic issues undertaken here. It is a valuable guide in methodological techniques, and provides insight into the background of professional movie critics. If Wanderer's finding that critics belong to the upper-middle class is correct, any agreement between the public and the critic found in the present study would be an indication of an elevation of public tastes. If, however, there is a lack of agreement, Wanderer's study points toward one area of explanation and further

research--socioeconomic factors and movie choice.

This study is designed to find empirical support for or against the proposition that an apparent maturation, or intellectualization, of the general public has taken place over the recent decades. Movies constitute an important part of many people's leisure time activities, and as such, movies are an important indicator of public attitudes, of likes and dislikes. Max Kaplan has compiled some statistics which show that, out of all monies spent on recreational activities, movies, for the years 1969 through 1971, constitute approximately three percent of each year's total expenditure (Kaplan, 1975, p. 117). For the movies, still a relatively inexpensive form of entertainment, to make up three percent of a total that includes almost every form of recreation imaginable, certainly indicates the popularity of the movies as a leisure-time activity.

Joffre Dumazedier breaks down leisure activities into three main functions: 1) relaxation--provides recovery from fatigue and repairs the physical and nervous damage brought about the tensions of daily pressures; 2) entertainment--provides relief from boredom--a break from the daily routine; 3) personal development--serves to liberate the individual from the daily automatism of thought and action. It permits a broader, readier social participation on the one hand, and on the other, a willing cultivator of the physical and mental self over and above utilitarian consideration of job or practical advancement (Roberts, 1970, pp. 57-58). The movies, as a leisure activity, are normally placed under the category of entertainment.

If the public's selectivity and maturation can be shown, the movies may be more appropriately placed in the category of personal development.

Dumazedier conducted a study in France which indicates the public's increased seriousness concerning films. He prefaced his findings, however, with the following statement: "Public taste is basically ambiguous. It has been improving, however, since before the war. Today, the biggest receipts generally are earned by the best-known films--by that ten percent of the production that the critics praise. But the votes don't go automatically either to the best or the worst of the ten percent" (1967, p. 140). One must take into account, particularly in the United States, the influence of advertising in the creation of the best-known films. Undoubtedly, advertising plays a much more active part in the creation of the well-known movie than the reviews of movie critics, at least in America. Therefore, one must accept Dumazedier's findings as an indication of what is possible, if not already true, of the American film-going public.

Dumazedier found that only 13 percent of movie-goers went to the movies seeking a release, a break from monotony. For 23 percent the movies were merely a way to pass the time, no more or less significant than another pastime. Forty percent were looking for an "imaginary life" in the movies. Finally, 24 percent went to the movies as a source of information and education (Dumazedier, 1967, pp. 141-144). Therefore, 64 percent of those surveyed take their movie-going seriously, for Dumazedier points out that the largest group, those seeking an "imaginary life" have a "richer and sharper sense of why they go to the show" (1967, p. 143). This seriousness represents what Dumazedier terms the "dynamic approach" toward leisure activities: "A combination of physical and mental attitudes capable of assuring the optimum growth of the personality through an optimum participation in social and cultural life" (1967, p. 223). Dickinson pin-points

the group that may represent this more actively involved movie-going public in America: "The age group most easily attracted to the many forms of entertainment is that from seventeen to the mid-twenties . . . . A lesser but important number of adults . . . come under consideration. This older public has transferred its regular attendance at the cinema to watching television; they choose their films from reviews or by word of mouth, they are no longer a passive audience" (1971, p. 137).

While it is certainly "unwise", as Dumazedier reminds, to deduce from analysis of film criticism the cultural patterns of the whole population" (1967, p. 224), these film criticisms do represent an intellectual view of the movies. One would naturally look to the critics to gain the most educated view of movies today. As such, a comparison between public movie-going habits and critical reviews would be indicative of an increased seriousness toward movies by the public if agreement is found. If, however, there is a lack of agreement, Seldes' contention, discussed in Chapter Three, that the critics may represent the attitudes of those who have stopped going to the movies, may very well be true. At least to the extent that those who take an active part in the selection of movies to be seen are not of sufficient numbers to influence over-all patterns.

Of course, the maturation of the public is not the only result expected from this study. What types of movies does the public like and dislike? Where do the critics and the public agree and disagree? And, what does this say about the public? Are popular movies escape mechanisms or intellectual experiences? If increased understanding of how the public spends its leisure time is gained, a clearer picture of current public attitudes and perceptions may be achieved.

## Notes for Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> In this case, the general public is restricted to the Consumer's Report readership.

<sup>2</sup> The ratings used in this study, as compiled by Boxoffice magazine, are very similar to the ratings used in Wanderer's study, several critical ratings combined to arrive at a single final score.

## Chapter V

### METHODOLOGY

And early problem in this study was the determination of a measure which would accurately reflect the public's movie-going habits. It was decided that a preferred measure would take account of the nation's film-going habits. Moreover, the time selected would be long enough to balance out short-term historical and idiosyncratic factors. Variety's annual listing of "The Big Rental Films" for the years 1978, 1979, 1980 is used in this study. These lists reflect domestic rentals accruing to the distributors (not total ticket sales earned by theatres from the films themselves). The rule-for-inclusion as "big rental" is a film domestically earning rentals of at least \$1,000,000.00 during the calendar year reported. Rental amounts are chosen as indicators of the public's movie-going habits primarily because the more exact figures of film grosses or actual film attendance are unavailable. Doug Potash, a representative of United Artists Distributing Corporation, maintains that any listing of films in order of either film grosses or film rents would be "virtually identical."<sup>1</sup>

There is still the question of whether or not film rental, as a reflection of total attendance, is a valid test of a movie's popularity. Popularity implies that a movie is liked by a large number of people, yet simple attendance at a film does not necessarily lead to a favorable

reaction. It cannot be assumed that everyone who sees a movie also likes it. The appreciation of a film, however, is an aesthetic evaluation of a product more appropriately placed in a discussion of quality appreciation. The question of quality appreciation is difficult to discern without some direct measure of audience opinion. The comparison of film rental amounts with critical ratings is proposed here as a procedure to evaluate the relationship between film popularity and film quality.

It is the contention of this study that the decision to attend one film over another is a valid measure of that film's popularity. The selection of a film depends on many factors: advertising, "word of mouth", critical reviews, type of film, who stars in the film, etc. All of this information is digested by each film-goer before he makes his decision. It is highly unlikely that a person would go to a movie he knows he would not like. A positive correlation between rental amounts and critical ratings would lend support to this interpretation of selectivity and popularity. It would indicate that the movie-going public is indeed selecting their movies based upon their estimation of the movie's ability to please gained from the information available to them. Rather than defining popularity as a large number of people liking a movie, it may be more appropriate to define popularity as a great number of people seeing a movie. Certainly, the movie industry, from the studios down to the theatre operators, use the latter definition, box-office receipts measure popularity for the industry. Moreover, the trade journals, such as Variety and Box-office, stress the importance of attendance in measuring the impact of a film.

The definition of popularity used here has the unfortunate effect of bypassing those films of a specialized nature such as documentaries and foreign films. These types of films are undoubtedly very popular for a select group of movie-goers. The majority of these films, however, are not distributed for general public consumption. Only when these films have displayed a potential ability to appeal to a wider range of viewers by being extremely successful in their own select markets are they distributed more fully. Only three foreign films met the box-office criterion used in this study: "Autumn Sonata", "La Cage Aux Folles", and "My Brilliant Career". The fact that there are only three foreign films out of a sample of 300 spanning a three-year period adequately demonstrates the limited appeal of such films for the general audience.

On the other hand, the fact that even three foreign films made the "big rental" lists is an encouraging sign that the quality and specialized talents of the foreign film market is beginning to make in-roads among American film-goers. In the past two years many of the large distributing companies have begun to handle foreign films further expanding the foreign film's potential market (e.g., Columbia is handling the German film, "Das Boot" and United Artists is handling the French film, "Diva"). The fact that the larger, more established distributing firms are taking a chance on foreign films suggests a diversity of public interest.

Nonetheless, within the present study, special interest groups are still a small part of the aggregate movie-going public. Their specific likes and dislikes are overshadowed by the more massive response of the larger movie-going public. From everyday observation, it would appear that the better movies do attract more people, perhaps gaining impetus



from the attraction of the normally more discriminating specialized audiences. However, just as with any general rule, there are exceptions. These exceptions are primarily confined to specific genres (types) of films. Every few years a particular type of movie, while being essentially of poor quality, is nonetheless very popular. Thus, a few years ago Kung Fu movies were attracting large numbers and today the horror film has been extremely successful at the box-office.

Though there may remain some question about the use of rental amounts as a valid indicator of popularity, there is no problem with reliability. Film rentals, as a measure of attendance, are constant, stable instruments of measure. There were 347 movies included in the initial listings obtained from Variety for the three years. Forty-seven of these were dropped because of incomplete data, primarily the lack of critical reviews. The total sample is 300 films, 86.5 percent of the total number listed in Variety. As such, the sample should be representative of the movies nationally distributed for general consumption during the research period. Those films earning less than \$1,000,000.00 obviously made very little impact on the movie-going public and are consequently of little significance in a study of this nature.

Data collected for each film include total rental amount earned, date of release, type of film,<sup>2</sup> MPAA film rating (G, PG, R: X-rated films were excluded because they lacked critical reviews), and critical review ratings. Other factors affecting audience profile and turnover, but unavailable to this study, are playoff pattern (where a film plays) and the running time of the film.

Critical review ratings, type of film, and the MPAA film ratings are

obtained from Boxoffice magazine, a trade periodical. Boxoffice compiles a list of films reviewed by several other periodicals and reports their findings in the "Review Digest". Each film is given a numbered score (1-very poor, 2-poor, 3-fair, 4-good, 5-excellent) based on the reviews from Boxoffice, Variety, Hollywood Reporter, L. A. Times, N. Y. Times, N. Y. Daily News, and Time. These scores are averaged resulting in a final review rating. As can be seen, the periodicals used represent nationally respected news agencies or the better-known trade papers; thus, the reviews should reflect the opinions of important and respected critics, resulting in a critical rating of a film's quality. The fact that several different sources are used is also advantageous to the overall evaluation of a film. A cross-section of critical opinions is a more reliable and valid measurement of film quality than the opinion of only one.

The evaluation of film quality is, of course, an aesthetic process requiring judgmental decisions on the part of the evaluator. Everyone can determine their own likes and dislikes, but there must be some arbitrators of film quality whose opinions can be qualified by some standard of judgment more valid and reliable than the opinions of the average moviegoer. Who better than the professional film critic? They are today's experts on the movies. In fact, they are the only source for the qualitative measurement of film quality. To question their expertise in assessing film quality denies their education and experience documented in the literature. While accepting the film critic as an expert, it is true that some measurement error may occur in the process of reducing critical opinion to numerical scores. It is hoped that the averaging of several scores eliminates much of this measurement error.

In addition to the review ratings, Boxoffice also reports the MPAA film rating for each film as well as classifying each film by content such as comedy or drama. In some cases, films are classified as a dual type such as horror-suspense. In these instances, the first classification is used.

The other two variables, gross rental amounts and film release dates, are supplied in "The Big Rental Films" lists as compiled by Variety. With the data complete as to review ratings, rental amounts, MPAA ratings, type of film, and release dates for the great majority of the major films distributed over the three-year period, the variables may be analyzed and compared. Of primary interest to this study is the relationship between review ratings (as indicators of film quality) and rental amounts (as indicators of film popularity). The main hypothesis is that rental amounts are directly related to review ratings so that more favorable critical reviews should lead to greater film popularity. In addition, these major variables are studied in relation to the other possibly intervening variables. Specifically, the relationships between MPAA ratings, type of film, release date and rental amounts should be revealing as to general public preferences.

Due to the differing levels of measurement among the variables, several different statistical methods are incorporated into the study including crosstabulations, partial correlations, breakdown analysis, case listings by the two major variables, as well as information provided by cumulative frequency tables.

The relationship between the public and the movies has been studied from many different perspectives. Full-scale investigations of public

preferences and levels of appreciation concerning the movies are lacking. This study is breaking new ground and is therefore broadly descriptive. The inclusion of large numbers of variables would hamper the analysis of the basic hypothesis stated above. A starting point for further research is established here. In addition to testing the basic hypothesis, it is this study's purpose to define, describe, and indicate other areas of research to further answer the complex questions with respect to the public's relationship to the movies.

## Notes for Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> In the telephone conversation with Mr. Potash he gave me his assurance that film rentals are accurate in predicting film attendance as a film's gross receipts.

<sup>2</sup> There are 24 different types of film: comedy, drama, action, horror, suspense, science fiction, romance, musical, adventure, comedy with music, western, mystery, war, outdoor, crime, animated, fantasy, biography, drama with music, documentary, political, concert, filmed play, and biblical.

## Chapter VI

### FINDINGS AND SUMMARY DISCUSSION

#### Findings

The average motion picture today costs \$10,000,000.00 to produce and must take in approximately \$16,000,000.00 to make a profit (Silverman, 1981, p. 74). This study shows that the mean rental amount for all the movies listed among the top rental grossing films for the years 1978-80 is only 12.008 million dollars. Eighty percent of these movies made less than 16 million dollars. Inflationary times are taking their toll in the movie industry. Many smaller, independent studios are selling out or merging with the giants in the industry. Even the giants no longer stand alone as evidenced by Columbia Pictures take over by the Coca-Cola Company. Financially, the motion picture industry would appear to be in bad shape. Yet one reason major corporations continue to invest in the entertainment industry is the remaining twenty percent of the films that make money, often very big money. As of 1981 it is estimated that "The Empire Strikes Back" has made 98 million dollars and "Superman" 47.5 million dollars in the United States alone (Big-Buck Films: Costs vs. U. S. Yield, 1981, p. 33).

How is the consumer spending his movie-going dollars? What is he watching and what is he avoiding? How does this compare to the movie experts, the film critics? Are the better films, as judged by the critics,

money-makers, and if not, what films do make a profit? These questions are of interest to sociologists of leisure. Answers to these questions are of dire importance for an industry at the crossroads. If the movie, as a form of mass entertainment, is to endure, the public must be satisfied. It is not an issue of attracting specific age groups to the movies, but a problem of appealing to a wider selection of the potential audience. As pointed out earlier, it has been said that the young go to the movies; and yet the youth audience has been declining.<sup>1</sup> Many in the industry feel that an increase in youth appeal is needed. Their view is that the young go to the movies, so the thrust should be to make movies for the young. Younger audiences are the industry's only stable market. They do keep going to the movies, because they are the ones who most want to get out of the house, and they go to the movies with very little inducement. Thus, much of the recent decline in the youthful audience may be attributed to the general decline in the numbers of young people throughout the population. Therefore, even though youth will continue to go to the movies, the decline in their overall numbers indicates that other segments of the population must be prodded to attend.

The really big money-making films attract audiences from almost every group in the population. But, these films account for a relatively small percentage of the total films produced. The top ten percent of the films in this survey in terms of rental amounts earned (see Appendix II) accounts for 44 percent of the total rental amount for all the movies. This policy of youth appeal maintained so steadfastly by the movie industry has become a rut from which few studios have yet tried to extricate themselves. Indeed, the more serious films or those with adult themes are

having difficulty finding backers within the industry (Movies New Motto: Youth Must Be Served, 1981, p. 50). While catering to the youth market has sustained the film producers, it has at the same time narrowed film's creative potential.

Perhaps this narrow view is justified. In discussing the findings of this survey, the public response to the movies, as reflected by rental amounts earned, shall be dealt with first.

Public Taste. The mean rental amount earned for all movies is 12.008 million dollars. The median is 6.915 million dollars. Obviously, the great majority of films do not earn what could be called a large amount of money, especially in light of the 16 million dollar profit criterion mentioned earlier; this figure is only an approximation and, of course, not a hard and fast rule. In reviewing the frequency distribution of rental amounts it becomes increasingly clear that the majority of films produced, in all probability, do not make money.<sup>2</sup> Using the figures already stated, 67 percent of the films made less than 10 million dollars, 72 percent made less than the mean of 12 million dollars, and fully 80 percent made less than 16 million dollars. Obviously, Hollywood is still living, indeed surviving, by the blockbuster hit. But what type of films are these blockbusters? What are the films the public wants?

One may answer these questions in several ways. First, looking at just the top 10 percent of the rental amounts (Appendix II), 1,567.64 million dollars or 44 percent of the total is represented. "Star Wars" earning 175.69 million dollars is number one. Of this top 10 percent, 9 or 30 percent are classified as comedies<sup>3</sup> (10.2 percent of all comedies), 5 or 16.6 percent are science fiction (29.4 percent of all science fiction),



4 or 13.3 percent are action films (13.8 percent of all action), and 3 or 10 percent are dramas (6.8 percent of all dramas). Other type classifications are, of course, included, but are of less significance with the exception of horror films. Because of their recent fad appeal it should be noted that 2 or 6.6 percent of the top 10 percent are horror films (8.7 percent of all horror films).

Of equal significance is the bottom approximate 10 percent (Appendix II).<sup>4</sup> These 35 films totalled 43.19 million dollars, only 1.2 percent of the total for all movies. Among these losers, 7 or 20.0 percent are comedies (8 percent of all comedies)<sup>5</sup> 5 or 14.3 percent are action films (17.2 percent of all action), 5 or 14.3 percent are horror films (21.7 percent of all action), 5 or 14.3 percent are horror films (21.7 percent of all horror films), 4 or 11.4 percent are dramas (9.1 percent of all dramas), and 4 or 11.4 percent are romances (28.6 percent of all romances). It is worthwhile to note here that only one science fiction film (5.9 percent of all science fiction) is in the bottom ten percent.

Turning to the contingency table<sup>6</sup> in which types of film and rental amounts are compared (Table 5), it becomes obvious that there is indeed a concentration of films in the lower end of the rental amounts as indicated by the large proportions of films earning less than the mean rental amount of 12.008 million dollars (72 percent). This concentration, although making analysis somewhat more difficult and reducing later correlations, is another indication that the blockbuster hit is the industry's sustaining power. Analysis, in this case, may be made in a progressive manner. That is, comparing the various types of film first to the median (6.915 million dollars), then to the mean (12.008 million dollars), and finally to the

TABLE 5  
 Film Types and Earned Rental Amounts  
 (in percentages)

Rental Amount (\$ Millions)	Film Types						
	Comedy	Drama	Action	Horror	Susp.	Sci-Fi	Romance
1.0--3.99	22.7	25.0	55.2	34.8	31.6	23.5	50.0
4.0--6.99	20.5	15.9	10.3	13.0	15.8	23.5	7.1
7.0--9.99	19.3	20.5	13.8	13.0	15.8	5.9	21.4
10.0--12.99	4.5	6.8	0	21.7	5.3	11.8	0
13.0--15.99	3.4	13.6	3.4	4.3	15.8	0	7.1
16.0--18.99	4.5	4.5	3.4	4.3	0	0	0
19.0--21.99	6.8	2.3	0	0	5.3	0	7.1
22.0--24.99	2.3	2.3	0	0	0	0	0
25.0--27.99	4.5	0	0	0	5.3	5.9	0
28.0--30.99	2.3	4.5	0	4.3	0	0	7.1
31.0 & over	9.1	4.5	13.8	4.3	5.3	29.4	0
Total N	88	44	29	23	19	17	14
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
% of all Types	30.9	15.4	10.2	8.1	6.7	6.0	4.9

TABLE 5  
(continued)

Rental Amount (\$ Millions)	Film Types						
	Music.	Adven.	Comedy w/music	West.	Myst.	War	Outdoor
1.0--3.99	40.0	37.5	42.9	14.3	50.0	60.0	25.0
4.0--6.99	10.0	37.5	0	57.1	33.3	20.0	50.0
7.0--9.99	20.0	0	14.3	14.3	16.7	0	25.0
10.0--12.99	20.0	12.5	14.3	14.3	0	0	0
13.0--15.99	10.0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0
16.0--18.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19.0--21.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22.0--24.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25.0--27.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28.0--30.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31.0 & over	0	0	28.6	0	0	20.0	0
Total N	10	8	7	7	6	5	4
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
% of all Types	3.5	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.1	1.8	1.4

TABLE 5  
(continued)

Rental Amount (\$ Millions)	Film Type	Total N Total % % of all Rentals
1.0--3.99	0	90 100.0 31.6
4.0--6.99	100.0	56 100.0 19.6
7.0--9.99	0	46 100.0 16.1
10.0--12.99	0	20 100.0 7.0
13.0--15.99	0	17 100.0 6.0
16.0--18.99	0	8 100.0 2.8
19.0--21.99	0	9 100.0 3.2
22.0--24.99	0	3 100.0 1.1
25.0--27.99	0	6 100.0 2.1
29.0--30.99	0	6 100.0 2.1
31.0 & over	0	24 100.0 8.4
Total N	4	
Total %	100.0	
% of all Types	1.4	

somewhat arbitrary yet indicative figure of 16 million dollars stated above.

The median score is of course, the midpoint where one finds equal proportions above and below. Extending this statement to the types of films, it should follow that approximately 50 percent of the films in each type should score above the median of 6.915 million dollars. Seven of the 15 types achieve this: (1) drama--59.1 percent, (2) comedy with music--52.9 percent, (3) comedy--56.8 percent, (4) science fiction--52.9 percent, (5) suspense--52.6 percent, (6) horror--52.2 percent, and (7) musical--50 percent. The remaining types would appear to be of less interest to the movie-going public. There are, of course, exceptions to this general pattern, particularly in the case of action films. Only 34.5 percent of these scored above the median yet 13.8 percent of the top ten percent of all the films are classified as action movies. Looking at Table 5 it is plain that action films, in general, do very poorly. This exception is best explained by looking at the four action films which are included in the top ten percent: "Superman", "Every Which Way But Loose", "Hooper", and "Moonraker". In all likelihood, the drawing power of the name of the film "Superman", already famous from comic books and television, and "Moonraker" as part of the continuing series of James Bond movies, the popularity of the stars Clint Eastwood in "Every Which Way But Loose", and Burt Reynolds in "Hooper", have elevated these actions films from the rank and file.

Taking the analysis to the next step, several of the seven types of films listed above drop considerably when compared to the mean score of 12.008 million dollars: (1) science fiction has 35.3 percent earnings

over the mean, (2) comedy--32.9 percent, (3) drama--31.7 percent, (4) suspense--31.7 percent, (5) comedy with music--28.6 percent, (6) horror--17.2 percent, and (7) musical--10.0 percent. The severe drops shown by horror films and musicals, 35 and 40 percent respectively, suggest that these types of movies are of only moderate interest to the public. This contention is further reinforced by the listing of the bottom approximately ten percent of rental amounts (Appendix II). Five horror films ("Jennifer", "Alice, Sweet Alice", "Motel Hell", "Manitou", and "It Lives Again"), and two musicals ("Roadie" and "The Kids Are Alright") are included in this list. The fad appeal of horror films would seem to be waning. Indeed, the two horror films which performed well enough to make the top ten percent in earning power had the added promotional benefit of best selling novels: "The Amityville Horror" and "The Shining".

As another step in discovering where the real moneymakers come from, each of the more popular types is compared to the approximate profit point of 16 million dollars: (1) science fiction films have 25.3 percent earnings above the 16 million dollar mark, (2) comedy--29.5 percent, (3) comedy with music--28.6 percent, (4) drama--18.1 percent, (5) suspense--15.9 percent. Obviously science fiction and comedy (including comedies with music) are most appealing to the movie-going public. The fact that science fiction and comedy constitute 53.2 percent of the top ten percent is further proof of this observation.

Finally, turning to the analysis of variance, the mean scores for each type of film may be compared to the above findings as a check. Listing each type in order from high to low in terms of mean rental amounts earned, the conclusions reached above are further supported: (1) science

fiction--32.55 million; (2) comedies with music--21.85 million; (3) comedies--12.50 million; (4) action films--11.10 million; (5) drama--11.063 million; (6) suspense--10.97 million; (7) war--9.62 million; (8) horror--8.96 million; (9) romance--7.43 million; (10) musicals--6.80 million; (11) adventure films--6.12 million; (12) crime--6.05 million; (13) westerns--5.97 million; (14) outdoor films--4.91 million; and (15) mysteries--4.84 million.

It should be noted that, with the high concentration of lower scores, even the apparently most popular types of films are well represented in the lower categories. Fully 47 percent of the science fiction films and 43.2 percent of the comedies made less than 7.0 million dollars. This phenomenon is caused by two factors. First, the low earning power of movies in general; and second, the "bandwagon" effect. That is, once a movie type is perceived as popular, its production increases, everyone wants to make that type of picture and often quality standards are sacrificed. Thus, movies such as "Message From Space" and "Star Crash" are made, capitalizing on the popularity of science fiction films. It is interesting to note that dramatic films have the fewest (40.9 percent) number earning less than 7.0 million dollars.

By and large, it would appear that the public's tastes in movies may be most appropriately placed in Dumazedier's entertainment category. That is, the majority are looking for a break from daily routine, an escape as it were. Science fiction films and comedies dominate in all the various analyses of popularity. This is not to say that these findings are indicative of a generally nonselective movie-going public. Indeed, the purpose of this survey is to compare these findings against critical

ratings. It is too easy, at this point, to contend that science fiction and comedies are of an overall lower caliber than other movies. Beyond this, there are other indications that the film-going public is indeed taking their movie going more seriously.

The high appeal of science fiction films, films of an other-worldly nature, are, perhaps, indicative of the types of movies one may seek to obtain what Dumazedier has termed an "imaginary life".<sup>7</sup> Certainly, the popularity of science fiction represents a basic future orientation among the movie-going public. It cannot be said that science fiction films and comedies are necessarily movies for a nonthinking public. Beyond this, the continual generally high placement of dramatic films, movies of a more serious nature, may point toward a movie-going public which does not limit itself and is of a more well-rounded nature. Three dramas, "Kramer vs. Kramer", "Rocky II", and "The Deer Hunter" are in the top ten percent in earnings.

The MPAA film rating, that is G, PG, and R, is said to affect the box-office performance of a movie. R-rated films, those of a more adult orientation in terms of language, sex and violence, are said to be more popular with the movie-going public. The motion picture industry certainly believes this to be true. Of all the films rated from 1968 through July 31, 1980, 15.9 percent were G, 37.0 percent were PG, and 41.3 percent were R (Encyclopedia of Exhibition, 1980, p. 39). Of the 326 movies rated in 1980, 4.6 percent were G, 39.6 percent were PG, and 46.3 percent were R (Movies' New Motto: Youth Must be Served, 1981, p. 48).

In the current survey 20 or 6.7 percent are rated G, 175 or 58.3 percent are rated PG, and 105 or 35 percent are rated R. The differences



in percentages as compared to the larger statistics cited above may be explained by the fact that not all movies produced in any given year are included in Variety's "top rental" lists nor are all movies reviewed. In any case, the findings of this survey are still relevant.

Analysis of public reaction to MPAA film ratings is made more difficult by the restrictive nature of the rating itself. In general, a film's rating is determined by increasing amounts of nudity, violence and rough language, progressing from G (suitable for children) to X (suitable only for adults). Thus, only films rated PG are likely to draw on the complete movie-going public, and will, therefore, statistically dominate. Children under 17 years are restricted from R rated movies, and adults (unless accompanying children) are likely to avoid G rated movies. The mean rental amounts earned at each rating level would seem to bear this out: PG with a mean of 12.79 million dollars; G with 11.52 million dollars; and R with 10.80 million dollars.

These mean scores, however, would seem to contradict the general Hollywood feeling that R rated films do better at the box-office. Indeed, the correlation between film rating and rental amounts is nil ( $-.038$ ,  $p=0.26$ ). This seemingly good performance by G rated films may only reflect the public's reaction to the overall scarcity of G rated films. That is so few family films are produced that when they are made available they draw unnaturally large crowds, parents seeking appropriate entertainment for their young children.

A more accurate understanding of film rating performance may be gained in reviewing Table 6 in which film ratings and rental amounts are compared. As can be seen, G rated films, while not obtaining great financial success,

TABLE 6  
 MPAA Film Ratings and Earned Rental Amounts  
 (in percentages)

Row % Col. % \$ Millions	MPAA Rating			Total N Total % % of all Rentals
	G	PG	R	
1.0--3.99	2.1 10.0	65.3 35.4	32.6 29.5	95 100.0 34.7
4.0--6.99	7.0 1.3	56.1 18.3	36.8 20.0	57 100.0 19.0
7.0--9.99	16.7 40.7	56.3 15.4	27.1 12.4	48 100.0 16.0
10.0--12.99	4.8 5.0	57.1 6.9	38.1 7.6	21 100.0 7.0
13.0--15.99	10.5 10.0	42.1 4.6	47.4 8.6	19 100.0 6.3
16.0--18.99	11.1 5.0	33.3 1.7	55.6 4.8	9 100.0 3.0
19.0--21.99	0 0	40.0 2.3	60.0 5.7	10 100.0 3.3
22.0--24.99	0 0	100.0 1.7	0 0	3 100.0 1.0
25.0--27.99	0 0	83.3 2.9	16.7 0.95	6 100.0 2.0
28.0--30.99	0 0	33.3 1.1	66.7 3.8	26 100.0 2.0
31.0 & over	7.7 10.0	65.4 9.7	26.9 6.7	26 100.0 8.7
Total N	20	175	105	100
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	
% of all MPAA ratings	6.7	58.3	35.0	

do tend to maintain a more respectable mid-range performance than either PG- or R-rated films. Only two G-rated films grossed more than 18.99 million dollars in rental amounts: "Star Trek" and "The Muppet Movie". These two films may well be an exception, drawing, as they do, on their long established television popularity. Yet, even without these two movies, G-rated films still perform at a higher scale than PG- or R-rated films. Only ten percent of the G-rated movies are found in the lowest range of rental amounts, "Sea Gypsies" and "My Brilliant Career" (a foreign film), as opposed to 35.4 percent of the PG- and 29.5 percent of the R-rated movies. The G-rated film, however, does not fit into a general definition of the blockbuster movie.

In comparing the performance of PG- and R-rated films, there is only a very slight indication that R-rated films earn more and are therefore more popular with the movie-going public. One-third of the PG-rated films earned in the lowest rental category, while only 29.5 percent of the R-rated films earned that low an amount. In like manner, 19.4 percent of the PG-rated films earned over 16 million, while 21.95 percent of the R-rated films exceeded that amount. Therefore, one may conclude from this survey that R-rated films are only slightly more lucrative than PG-rated movies. Of course, it must be kept in mind that PG films are drawing on a greater population base since there are no age restrictions as with R-rated movies. The fact that R-rated films perform as well as, if not better than, PG-rated movies suggests that R-rated films are indeed somewhat better moneymakers.

Movies have become what is essentially a seasonal business. Films are, of course, made all year round. Yet particular seasons experience a

great surge in movie releases. Not unexpectedly, these surging seasons correspond with holiday or vacation seasons, especially Christmas and summer. The reasoning behind this phenomenon is not difficult to understand; most schools across the nation are closed, thereby boosting the likelihood of movie attendance by the young and work is temporarily suspended whether through holiday time-off or vacation. More people are looking for something to do. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a fairly strong relationship between movie release dates and rental amounts earned ( $F=4.52$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

June and December are indicative of the general pattern of release. Both had a large number of releases: 36 movies in June and 34 in December. These represent only 23.3 percent of all the movies in the sample, yet they earned 42.5 percent of the total rental amount. Conversely, January, February, March, April, August, September and November each having relatively few releases, account for only 28.7 percent of the total rental amount earned and 45 percent of all the movies. Hollywood schedules the release of what they anticipate to be their most popular films to coincide with periods of high attendance.

The importance of release date to a particular movie is significant in that release during a slack period is likely to affect its earning performance adversely. Looking at the lists for high and low rental amounts (Appendix II), the above statement would appear to be true. May, June, July, October and December have the highest number of releases for the whole sample, 25 of the top 30 films were released during these months. On the other hand, only 15 of the bottom ten percent were released during the same months.

Critical Opinion. Having established the apparent preferences in the public domain, the critic's likes and dislikes may now be described. Critical review ratings, as measured in numerical scores from 1 to 5, were generally high with a mean score of 3.524 and a median of 3.509. Only 3.0 percent of all the films received less than a 2 rating, while 25.3 percent scored over 4. In like manner, seven films scores the highest rating of 5 and only one received the lowest rating of 1. Film critics thus appear to be fairly lenient. Of course, individual ratings are diluted when grouped together to form an average film rating, but there is a tendency in most reviews to find some redeeming value in any particular film. Very few movies are universally panned in all categories by all reviewers. Indeed, the averaging method employed here, in all likelihood, accounts for the relatively high critical scores. There is a very slight indication that movies receiving more total reviews have a higher overall critical rating score. The average mean score for films with only two reviews is 3.39, while films with six reviews score an average of 3.62. This rather small difference does not disrupt the statistical accuracy of the study due to the fact that only 28 films (9.3 percent of the total) received less than four reviews.

Determining the film critic's preferences is somewhat deceiving because first impressions are muddled when facts are analyzed more deeply. While the films seemingly group together, much as they did in the public response analysis, further study into the individual types of films reveals more disagreement. Certainly, this should be expected. Public response deals with the likes and dislikes of thousands and individual differences are lost in the averages. Critical opinion, however, while somewhat

diluted in the averaging process still involves, at most, only six individuals.

Seven films received the highest score of 5.0: (1) "The Goodbye Girl"; (2) "Airplane"; (3) "Superman"; (4) "Kramer vs. Kramer"; (5) "Manhattan"; (6) "Coming Home"; and (7) "Ordinary People". Of these seven, three are comedies, three are dramas, and one is an action film. The one movie which received the lowest rating of 1.0 is "Friday the 13th", a horror film.

The list of top films by critical rating (Appendix II)<sup>8</sup> includes 15 dramas, 11 comedies, 3 science fiction, 3 musicals, 2 comedies with music, 2 war movies, 2 romances, 2 action films, 1 suspense film, 1 crime movie, and 1 horror film.<sup>9</sup> The list of lowest scoring films (Appendix II) includes 8 comedies, 7 horror films, 4 suspense movies, 2 each in the action, drama, and comedy with music categories, and 1 each in the mystery, science fiction, western, romance, and adventure categories. It is apparent from these lists that dramatic films are the most popular among the critics, while horror movies are the least favored. The other types fall somewhere in between with musical, science fiction, war movies, crime films, comedies and romances on the plus side and suspense films, mysteries, adventure films, westerns, and action films on the negative.

Table 7, illustrating the relationships between critical ratings and film types, tends to agree. At first glance, comedies and dramas appear to be the most favored by the film critics. Of the 86 movies receiving the top critical rating of 4.0--5.0, 27 or 31.4 percent are comedies and 18 or 20.9 percent are dramas. The other film types are less numerous with action films being the next highest number, 7 or 8.1 percent. While it is

TABLE 7  
 Film Types and Critical Ratings  
 (in percentages)

Row % Col. %	Film Types						
Critical Rating	Comedy	Drama	Action	Horror	Susp.	Sci-Fi	Romance
1.0--1.99	11.1 1.1	0 0	11.1 3.5	55.6 21.7	11.1 5.3	11.1 5.9	0 0
2.0--2.99	29.2 15.9	8.3 9.1	10.4 17.2	10.4 21.7	10.4 26.3	8.3 23.5	4.2 14.3
3.0--3.99	32.4 52.3	15.5 50.0	11.3 55.2	8.5 52.2	6.3 47.4	4.2 35.3	4.9 50.0
4.0--5.0	31.4 30.7	20.9 40.9	8.1 24.1	1.2 4.4	4.7 21.1	7.0 35.3	5.8 35.7
Total N	88	44	29	23	19	17	14
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
% of all Types	30.9	15.4	10.2	8.1	6.7	6.0	4.9

Row % Col. %	Film Types						
Critical Rating	Music.	Adven.	Comedy w/music	West.	Myst.	War	Outdoor
1.0--1.99	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
2.0--2.99	0 0	8.3 50.0	2.1 14.3	2.1 14.3	4.2 33.3	0 0	0 0
3.0--3.99	4.2 60.0	2.1 37.5	2.1 42.9	4.2 85.7	1.4 33.3	0 0	2.1 75.0
4.0--5.0	4.7 40.0	1.2 12.5	3.5 42.9	0 0	2.3 33.3	5.8 100.0	1.2 25.0
Total N	10	8	7	7	6	5	4
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
% of all Types	3.5	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.1	1.8	1.4

TABLE 7  
(continued)

Row % Col. %	Film Type	Total N Total % % of all Ratings
Critical Rating	Crime	
1.0--1.99	0 0	9 100.0 3.2
2.0--2.99	2.1 25.0	48 100.0 26.8
3.0--3.99	0.7 25.0	142 100.0 49.8
4.0--5.0	2.3 50.0	86 100.0 30.2
Total N	4	285
Total %	100	
% of all Types	1.4	



certainly valid to break down into types those movies receiving the highest critical ratings, it is only an indication of critic's individual preferences. Any type of film may be made poorly. Indeed, comedies are the most numerous in the 4.0--5.0 category, yet viewing comedy films as a whole, only 30.7 percent are rated in the top category.

In this light, it would be most accurate to analyze critic's preferences by examining each film type. How then do individual types stack up with the 4.0--5.0 category? A rank order list follows: (1) war--100 percent; (2) crime--50 percent; (3) comedies with music--42.9 percent; (4) drama--40.9 percent, (5) musical--40.0 percent; (6) romance--35.7 percent; (7) science fiction--35.3 percent; (8) mystery--33.3 percent; (9) comedy--30.7 percent; (10) outdoor--25.0 percent; (11) action--24.1 percent; (12) suspense--21.1 percent; (13) adventure--12.5 percent; (14) horror--4.4 percent; and (15) western--0 percent.

Of course, particular types, due to their overall low incidence, are unreliable as generalizing indicators. Outdoor films and crime movies, only four of each, while seemingly ranking fairly high, represent only one of two films in the top ranking category of Table 7. Although there are only five war films in the entire survey, this type differs from all the rest whether of high or low incidence because all five war movies were rated between 4.0 and 5.0. Ordinarily, the lower number of this type would make it suspect, but the fact that all five are in the highest critical rating category mark it as a type preferred by the critics.

Comedies with music, dramas and musicals rank high in the critics' choices while adventure films, horror movies and westerns perform poorly. As a final check to these findings, a list of types in order of their mean

critical rating follows: (1) war--4.2; (2) musical--3.77; (3) drama--3.8; (4) comedy with music--3.7; (5) crime--3.6; (6) outdoor--3.6; (7) romance--3.54; (8) comedy--3.53; (9) science fiction--3.48; (10) action--3.41; (11) mystery--3.33; (12) western--3.31; (13) suspense--3.30; (14) adventure--3.16; and (15) horror--2.8. Once again, the same types are scoring high, i.e., war, musicals, dramas, and comedies with music, and the same are scoring low, i.e., westerns, suspense, adventure and horror.

Little can be said in terms of evaluating critical preferences. Critics view films from a different perspective than the ordinary moviegoer. Quality production and acting standards sway a critic's opinion. Any film may be made well, as evidenced by the fact that every type, with the sole exclusion of westerns, has at least one film in the top ranked category. Critical opinion is more evenly distributed among the film types than was true of public response. Of course, some preferences stand out. Certainly, critical opinion has a more serious nature than public opinion. War films and drama are preferred as opposed to comedy and science fiction. Reality rather than escapism has more impact with critics. Entertainment, for movie critics, is not restricted to comedy and special effects, but it does seem to have a preference for the trappings of reality. War films offer up the grim reality of man against man and the justice and injustice of war. Dramas, like "Kramer vs. Kramer", look at the inner workings of man as well as man's relationship with others. Even the lighter side of critical preferences, musicals such as "Fame", "Hair", and "Honeysuckle Rose", still deal with real life situations accompanied by music. Opposed to this is the critic's obvious dislike of the unrealistic nature of many horror films. But, in the end, critical opinion

cannot be second guessed merely from film type. Too many elements are involved in the creation of critical opinion for any one factor to outweigh any other. All that may be said with any degree of assurance is that critics are more likely to rate dramas high and horror pictures low.

The MPAA film rating, viewed as a measure of greater or lesser amounts of adult content in a film, may be correlated with critical review ratings. Critical reviews rate the extent of quality in a film, while MPAA film ratings measure the amount of what is considered adult content in a film; i.e., violence, profanity, nudity, sex, etc. The correlation between critical review ratings and MPAA film ratings is fairly low,  $-0.1491$ , although significant at the  $.005$  level.

The minus correlation is interesting in that it indicates a critical preference for films of less adult content. That is, critics tend to find G films better than PG films and PG films better than R films. Table 8, representing the relationship between critical review ratings and MPAA film ratings, further illustrates this point.

As can be seen, G-rated movies seem to perform, overall, at a higher level. While it is true that only 30.0 percent of the G movies scored in the highest category, as opposed to 35.4 percent of the PG movies, no G movies were rated in the lowest category of 1.0 to 1.99. Indeed, 95 percent of the G movies earned a review rating of 3.0 or better, while 82.3 percent of the PG movies and 75.3 percent of the R movies scored 3.0 or higher. This view is further supported by the mean review rating for each MPAA film rating: G--3.735; PG--3.5931; R--3.3686.

These findings, while pointing out a tendency, are tempered by the fact that horror films, already established as a film type of little esteem

TABLE 8  
MPAA Film Ratings and Critical Ratings  
(in percentages)

Row % Col. % Critical Ratings	MPAA Rating			Total N Total % % of all Critical Rating
	G	PG	R	
1.0--1.99	0	33.3	66.7	9
	0	1.7	5.7	100.0
				3.0
2.0--2.99	2.0	57.1	40.8	49
	5.0	16.0	19.0	100.0
				16.3
3.0--3.99	9.0	56.9	34.0	144
	65.0	46.9	46.7	100.0
				48.0
4.0--5.0	6.1	63.3	30.6	98
	30.0	35.4	28.6	100.0
				32.7
Total N	20	175	105	300
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	
% of all	6.7	58.3	35.0	
MPAA Ratings				

for most critics, are heavily weighted in the R rating category. Nineteen of the 23 horror films are rated R. This, however, should not be taken as a rejection of the tendency found. In fact, eliminating horror films does not reverse the original tendency.

There is one explanation which may answer this apparent preference for films containing less "adult" content; G movies and PG movies may be

honestly better than R movies. Certainly there is no restriction of quality simply because less "adult" fare is included in a film. Just as any type of film may be made excellently or poorly, any film rated G, PG, or R may be made excellently or poorly. Are "Manhattan", "Coming Home", and "Ordinary People" (which are all rated R) any better than "The Goodbye Girl", "Airplane", "Superman" and "Kramer vs. Kramer" (which are all rated PG) simply because they are rated R? The critics think not since all received ratings of 5.0. In like manner, it cannot be assumed that G-rated movies are inherently lacking in quality simply because they are suitable viewing for children. Nor is the appeal of G-rated movies restricted to "kiddies". "Black Stallion", "The Muppet Movie", "My Brilliant Career", "Pete's Dragon", "Sea Gypsies", and "The Wiz" are all G-rated films with review ratings over 4.0.

Obviously, a diversification of interests is possible with G-rated movies. But, even as regards the strictly "kiddy" films, such as "Herbie Goes Bananas" and "Unidentified Flying Oddball", it cannot be assumed that the critics view these films as being of lesser quality than PG- or R-rated movies. To do so would detract from the critic's professionalism and versatility. While a critic's individual preferences may be for more adult films, a film is reviewed on its quality not on the reviewer's preferences. It is erroneous to state that a film is bad because it is a "kiddy" film, just as it would be erroneous to state that a film is bad because it is rated G or PG or R or even X.

Public Taste vs. Critical Opinion. In reviewing the previous discussions, there are obvious disparaging differences between the likes and dislikes of the public and those of the critics. Most glaring are the

differences in film type preferences; the public preferring comedy and science fiction films and the critics leaning toward drama, war and musical films. It must be stressed, however, that these tendencies represent the extremes in opinion, i.e., the most liked film types, for each group. The public and the critics are not totally in conflict. While they do not completely agree, it is equally obvious that they do not completely disagree. As an example, comedy and science fiction movies, the public's apparent preferences, score fairly high, somewhere in the mid-range area, in the critics' ratings. In like fashion, drama films are somewhere in the middle of the public's likes and dislikes.

More specifically, how do the public and critics agree and disagree? Looking first at the lists of extremes from both the public's and the critics' standpoints provided in Appendix II, there is the greatest agreement between the highest ranking films of both lists. Fifteen of the thirty films listed in the top ten percent in earned rental amounts, representing the films most popular among movie-goers, are also on the list of the films ranked highest by the critics. Of these fifteen films, three are comedies ("The Goodbye Girl", "Airplane", and "California Suite"), three are science fiction ("Star Wars", "The Empire Strikes Back", and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"), two are comedies with music ("Grease" and "The Muppet Movie"), two are action films ("Superman" and "Hooper"), two are dramas ("Kramer vs. Kramer" and "The Deer Hunter"), one is a war film ("Apocalypse Now"), one is a biography ("Coal Miner's Daughter"), and one is a fantasy ("Heaven Can Wait").

This amount of agreement between lists indicates a fairly high possible correlation. Of course, only a relatively small portion of the

sample is represented in these lists and the correlation is further weakened by the fact that the same level of agreement is not found when comparing the low end of the respective groups, i.e., critical ranking and earned rental amounts. Only two of the 35 films listed under low earned rental amounts are also on the low critical rating list: one comedy ("Summer Camp"), and one horror film ("Motel Hell").

Apparently, the public and the critics more readily agree on what makes a good movie than on what makes one bad; again, keeping in mind that these lists represent only a small part of the total sample.

The amount of disagreement between lists is low. One film, "Smokey and the Bandit II", was well received by the public, but panned by the critics. Of course, one must weigh this disagreement against the drawing power of a star like Burt Reynolds and the even greater popularity of the first "Smokey and the Bandit" (not included in this sample). Four films earning little in rental amounts were highly acclaimed by the critics: "Girl Friends", "Alice Sweet Alice", "Resurrection", and "My Brilliant Career". One of these is a foreign film and two are dramas, all three likely to receive better ratings from the critics than from the public.

In general, these lists indicate more consensus between the public and the critics than dissensus, yet the correlation between critical rating and earned rental amount is modest, 0.293. As mentioned above, the differences in agreement at the upper and lower ends of each scale reduce the correlation. In addition to this, the concentrations of films at the lower end of earned rental amounts and at the upper end of critical ratings further reduces the correlation. Table 9 representing the relationship between critical ratings and earned rental amounts illustrates this point.

TABLE 9  
Critical Ratings and Earned Rental Amounts  
(in percentages)

\$ Millions	Critical Ratings				Total N Total % Total of all Rentals
	1.0--1.99	2.0--2.99	3.0--3.99	4.0--5.0	
1.0--3.99	55.6	34.7	31.9	27.6	95 100.0 31.6
4.0--6.99	11.1	26.5	19.4	15.3	57 100.0 19.0
7.0--9.99	11.1	24.5	18.8	8.2	48 100.0 16.0
10.0--12.99	11.1	8.2	7.6	5.1	21 100.0 7.0
13.0--15.99	0	2.0	4.9	11.2	19 100.0 6.3
16.0--18.99	11.1	0	2.1	5.1	9 100.0 3.0
19.0--21.99	0	2.0	2.8	5.1	10 100.0 3.3
22.0--24.99	0	0	1.4	1.0	3 100.0 1.0
25.0--27.99	0	2.0	1.4	3.1	6 100.0 2.0
28.0--30.99	0	0	2.1	3.1	6 100.0 2.0
31.0 & over	0	2.0	6.9	15.3	26 100.0 8.7
Total N	9	9	144	98	300
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
% of all Ratings	3.0	16.3	48.00	32.7	



Half of the entire sample is included in the first two rows of the table. With so many films earning such low amounts, the correlation between critical review ratings and earned rental amounts is attenuated. The general pattern of the table, however, illustrates the relationship fairly well. Once again taking into account the relatively small number of movies rated low by the critics and the great number of movies earning low rental amounts, it can be seen that the lower rated movies earn less and the higher rated movies earn more. An imaginary diagonal drawn from the upper left corner to the lower right corner helps illustrate this relationship. What is significant is that only the higher rated films, for the most part, earned high rental amounts.

One other area of general agreement between the public and the critics may be cited. That is, in the area of MPAA film rating. Both tend to contradict the notion that R-rated films are necessarily better. Both the public and the critics approve of and support G-rated movies, suggesting a new line of thought for Hollywood producers.

### Summary

Through the years the movie industry has progressed to the point where today it is a major element in the culture of the United States. Technical advances and their skillful applications, as well as the virtually unlimited range of story lines, enables the studios to produce films of a nature and quality unheard of even twenty years ago. This is not to say that past generations of film-makers made poor movies. Indeed, every generation has made classic films which will endure throughout time. Yet, the classic films being produced today display a greater skill in the use of the many advances experienced in the movie industry over the years.

Greater experiences enhance skills.

Still, as in the past, the movie industry's one main objective is entertainment. What will entertain the public? Does quality lead to success? Quality, however, is a shifting variable; is it fair to compare the quality of today's films with those of the past? Has the quality of films improved over the years? In the final reckoning, all that may truly be said is that the elements of a quality film have not changed. The state of the art has. What may have changed through the years is the appreciation of film quality.

Not until the advent of television did the appreciation of quality in a film become of major interest to the studios. The public could then afford to be selective in their choices of movie entertainment. But still, there was no attempt to measure the appreciation of quality. The studios equated quality with success, which, while sometimes true, is not always the case. Very much the same situation exists today.

This study attempts to analyze current levels of appreciation of quality displayed by today's movie-going public, assuming at the outset that appreciation of quality denotes a certain intelligence and sophistication. It has long been held that intelligence and sophistication are not characteristic of the movie-going public, implying that the quality of a film is not the motivating factor behind the public's acceptance or rejection of that movie.

This study has found that, in fact, the above statement is very often true. Measuring the quality of a film by critical rating, it would appear that the relationship between film quality and public acceptance, while a direct one, is not very strong. The overall pattern does suggest, however,

that higher quality films do, in general, meet with more acceptance, but that the quality of a film is not a strong indicator of public acceptance or financial success.

The movie-going public, by and large, prefers comedies and science fiction movies, suggesting a desire for sheer entertainment and escapism. The evidence also displayed a moderate acceptance by the public of those types of films such as drama preferred by the critics. Then too, critical opinion of those film types preferred by the public was often quite favorable. Horror movies, much publicized in recent years as being highly popular, are, in fact, of little appeal to the public and critics alike.

It is difficult to evaluate the current intellectual status of the movie-going public. There are no studies to assess the level of film intelligence of movie-goers of the past with the study reported here. Yet the findings in this study are not clear-cut one way or the other. It cannot be determined from this study whether or not the intellectual levels of today's movie-going public have truly risen. As depicted in the relationship between public acceptance of any film and critical opinion of that same film, the former would seem to be noticeably lower than for the latter. But what was it in the past? What will it be in the future?

Perhaps, the level is rising. A longitudinal research design is required for conclusive support for this statement. Yet, there are indications that this is occurring. The relatively modest level of agreement between the movie-going public and the film critics found in this study would suggest this. There appears to be a market for quality movies in a contemporary society. Fully half of the top ten percent in earned rental amounts are highly rated by the critics (Appendix II). Current

findings suggest that the public is largely in favor of escapist entertainment. This is not a disparagement because escapist entertainment does not preclude quality as evidenced by such films as "Superman" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". However, there are also indications that today's movie-going public are in favor of variety in choice. That is, they do not want their viewing choices limited, they are capable of appreciating many types of films. Comedy and science fiction are most popular, but a variety of other types are also enthusiastically supported. The limiting factor is Hollywood and the "bandwagon" effect. Nothing breeds imitation as quickly as success. In general, any film type may be produced poorly and certain types lend themselves to exploitation, particularly horror, action and science fiction films. What may be indicative of the increased selectivity of the public is its discrimination in choosing the better films in these categories.

The amount of agreement found may represent the "movie generation", those movie-goers who are attuned to the appreciation of movies, that is, those people who have grown up with the movies as part of their lives and take an active part in the selection and viewing of a film. Certainly, the positive correlation between rental amounts and review ratings suggests that this is true. If so, the "movie generation" represents a significant and possibly increasingly sizable minority of the movie-going public. It represents people who, recognizing quality, swell the boxoffice beyond the numbers represented by the more numerous, but more passive movie-goers.

Of course, with the general availability of the movies today, every generation becomes a "movie generation." The appreciation of quality implied by the term "movie generation" is not automatic. Appreciation of

quality is an earned ability coming with education and experience. The educational level of average movie-goers has been increasing (refer to Table 4) and experience is gained by repeated attendance. Thus, the younger movie-goers, in most cases, cannot be expected to have acquired the ability to appreciate quality. The past successes of horror films, largely attended by younger audiences, is evidence that youth and quality appreciation are often far apart. On the other hand, movies of recognized quality such as "Norma Rae" or "The Goodbye Girl" attract large numbers of people inclusive of these younger viewers, thus exposing them to the elements that give a film quality. Age, by itself, is not the discriminating factor in movie attendance. It is age combined with increasing experience and education, that creates the selectivity among members of the "movie generation".

The "baby boom" children are no longer children. They have grown into what may be the largest "movie generation" of all time. Yet the film producers continue to overlook their needs. The "baby boom" children no longer dictate what type of movies are being made. They have been replaced by the upcoming, as yet not fully matured, "movie generation." Each year, however, there will be more and more children graduating to the "movie generation" with fewer and fewer children to replace them (discounting any unforeseen future "baby booms"). Will the movie-makers be able to adjust to a market dominated by a "movie generation"?

For the time being, the movie industry will most likely continue as it has for years, and science fiction and comedies will continue to dominate. The astonishing success of science fiction has held constant for the last five years ("Star Wars" was released in 1977), and continues

unabated with the most recent phenomenon "E.T.--The Extraterrestrial". Perhaps the public is drawn to science fiction because they sense the coming of a new space age commencing with the success of the space shuttle Columbia; a space age in which they, the public, may actually play a participant role. The exploration of alien worlds is no longer beyond the realm of possibilities. Consequently the story lines of science fiction are no longer quite so unbelievable or remote.

Yet, the fluctuating popularity of different types of movies may represent nothing more than fads. As such, the staying power of any film type, or even what types will become popular, is reduced to guesswork. Kung Fu movies came and went. Horror films appear to be on the way out, and science fiction may be the next fatality. Comedy is the one film type which seems to sustain its popularity over the years. Nor can a particular type of comedy be pinpointed as more popular than another. Both the raunchy, slapstick comedy of "National Lampoon's Animal House" and the sophisticated comedy of "The Goodbye Girl" attract large crowds. Apparently, there is something to be said for the power of laughter whether as sheer entertainment or as a healing balm against the hardships of everyday life.

Thus, predicting the future of the movie business is highly speculative. Ultimately, the increased seriousness of the movie-going public proposed here as well as the evident maturing of the potential movie audience should result in an increase in popularity for those movies of a more sophisticated nature such as drama, and a broadening of popular film types reflecting a greater diversification of interests. At the same time, it is possible that the new conservatism growing in America today, as

evidenced by the Reagan administration, anti-abortionists, the failure of the E.R.A., etc., may work against this diversification of interests. Conservatism is often accompanied by a resistance to change, a retreat to the old familiar ways. If this should happen, the creative impulse moving Hollywood may be slowed or even reversed. The "better safe than sorry" attitude so prevalent during the blacklist era may return. Certainly, the preachings of the "Moral Majority" and similar groups will promote that atmosphere. The fact that R-rated films do not live up to the earning capacity held by the movie industry suggests that the public may already be reacting to the moralistic conservative preachings.

Another element affecting the future of the movies is the ever expanding technology of television including cable and videocassette recording. This new technology is providing quality entertainment at home. Movies themselves are in no great danger, as they will continue to be made, if only for his new market. However, the movie theatre may be in danger of extinction. The survival of the theatre depends upon the studios. If the competition of the home entertainment industry proves to be too much, the studios will undoubtedly abandon theatre distribution and television and its offspring would substantially replace the theatre as the basic form of mass entertainment. In such an event, theatres, if they endure at all, would constitute a special night out, attracting much smaller, but possibly more enthusiastic audiences. Specialized fare for select theatres, which is in fact already increasing in numbers every year, could be seen as the forerunner in this movement.

This study has established a starting point from which future studies may find answers for the complex trends just discussed. More research

might further refine the relationship between public taste and the movies. Studies utilizing socioeconomic and educational variables could define the movie-going public more exactly by breaking it down into more specialized groups. Longitudinal studies could trace the development of the movie-going public and its relationship to the movies themselves. And finally, what is sorely needed is a reliable measurement of the film-goers opinions, for without this the movie-going public's likes and dislikes will continue to defy precise attribution.

In any event, people will continue to go to the movies, at least for the foreseeable future. The good news is that the literature suggests, and the findings of this study do lend support to the notion of the emergence of a more selective, active segment of the movie-going audience which could shape the future of the movie industry toward a generally higher quality product. The direct relationship found between critical opinion, as a measure of film quality, and movie popularity suggests that there is, already, a greater general agreement between quality and popularity than was once thought to be the case.



## Notes for Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup> U. S. News and World Report (Movies' New Motto: Youth Must be Served, 1981, p. 48) states that attendance by movie-goers from 12 to 29 years of age dropped from 974 million in 1976 to 966 million in 1980.

<sup>2</sup> The 1979 Motion Picture Almanac estimates that the average negative cost of theatrical film in 1978 was \$5,000,000.00. This cost does not include promotional costs which may add several million dollars more to the cost of a film.

<sup>3</sup> If comedies with music are included under the one comedy classification, 11 or 36.7 percent of the top ten percent are comedies.

<sup>4</sup> In attempting to list the lower ten percent of the films it should be noted that 35 films are included due to identical rental scores of 1.50 million dollars.

<sup>5</sup> Nine or 25.7 percent if comedies with music are included.

<sup>6</sup> Grouping of data, by use of contingency tables, is necessary so that emergent patterns may be recognized. Rental amounts are divided into categories of approximately three million dollars which allows for the grouping of films without being too large, thus obscuring results. It should be noted that nine film types were omitted because of the low number of films in each type: animated, biography, drama with music, documentary, fantasy, political, concert, filmed play, and biblical.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Chapter IV of this study and Dumazedier's French survey.

<sup>8</sup> Forty-seven movies are included in this list because of identical scores. The top ten percent includes movies scoring 4.5, thus all films with the score of 4.5 are included, thereby increasing the list to 15.7 percent of the total.

<sup>9</sup> The four films not included in this summary are movie types dropped due to their scarcity in the sample as a whole.

APPENDIX I

Films Included in Sample with Accompanying Data

Movie Title	Critics' Rating	MPAA Rating	Type of Film	Release Date	Earned Rental Am't. (millions)
1. ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE	3.5	G	Outdoor	12/77	8.08
2. AGATHA	3.3	PG	Drama	2/79	2.70
3. AIRPLANE	5.0	PG	Comedy	7/80	38.00
4. ALICE SWEET ALICE	4.5	R	Horror	9/77	1.09
5. ALIEN	4.2	R	Sci-Fi	5/79	40.09
6. ALL THAT JAZZ	4.1	R	Dra. w/music	12/79	20.00
7. ALMOST SUMMER	4.0	PG	Comedy	4/78	2.60
8. AMERICAN GIGOLO	2.8	R	Drama	2/80	11.50
9. AMERICAN HOT WAX	3.8	PG	Comedy	3/78	5.53
10. AMERICATHON	2.3	PG	Comedy	8/79	2.43
11. AMITYVILLE HORROR	3.0	R	Horror	7/79	35.00
12. AND JUSTICE FOR ALL	3.3	R	Drama	9/79	14.60
13. APOCALYPSE NOW	4.5	R	War	8/79	36.85
14. THE APPLE DUMPLING GANG RIDES AGAIN	4.8	PG	Comedy	7/79	9.43
15. AUTUMN SONATA	4.8	PG	Drama	10/78	2.00
16. THE AWAKENING	2.4	R	Horror	9/80	4.25
17. THE BAD NEWS BEARS GO TO JAPAN	3.2	PG	Comedy	6/78	7.31
18. BATTLESTAR GALACTICA	2.5	PG	Sci-Fi	9/78	7.10
19. BEING THERE	4.8	PG	Comedy	12/79	10.80
20. THE BETSY	3.2	R	Drama	2/78	7.85
21. BEYOND THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE	2.8	PG	Advent.	5/79	2.10
22. THE BIG BRAWL	4.0	R	Action	8/80	3.00
23. THE BIG FIX	4.3	PG	Mystery	10/78	5.93
24. THE BIG RED ONE	4.0	PG	War	7/80	2.33
25. THE BIG SLEEP	2.8	R	Mystery	3/78	2.10
26. BIG WEDNESDAY	3.8	PG	Comedy	5/78	1.40
27. THE BLACK HOLE	3.8	PG	Sci-Fi	12/79	25.00
28. THE BLACK STALLION	4.3	G	Advent.	10/80	15.77
29. BLOODLINE	2.1	R	Mystery	6/79	5.37
30. BLUE COLLAR	4.6	R	Drama	2/78	3.03

31.	THE BLUE LAGOON	3.3	R	Drama	7/80	28.46
32.	THE BLUES BROTHERS	3.4	R	Comedy	6/80	31.00
33.	BOBBY DEERFIELD	4.0	PG	Romance	10/77	9.00
34.	BORDERLINE	3.0	PG	Drama	9/80	2.30
35.	BOULEVARD NIGHTS	3.5	R	Action	3/79	1.90
36.	THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL	3.3	R	Suspense	10/78	10.17
37.	THE BOYS IN COMPANY C	4.0	R	War	1/78	4.15
38.	BRASS TARGET	3.3	PG	Suspense	12/78	2.50
39.	BREAKING AWAY	4.3	PG	Comedy	8/79	9.88
40.	THE BRINK'S JOB	3.0	PG	Crime	12/78	6.94
41.	BRONCO BILLY	4.0	PG	Comedy	6/80	14.10
42.	BRUBAKER	3.2	R	Drama	6/80	19.00
43.	BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25th CENTURY	2.8	PG	Sci-Fi	4/80	19.00
44.	THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY	4.3	PG	Biog.	5/78	5.90
45.	BUTCH AND SUNDANCE, THE EARLY YEARS	3.1	PG	Western	6/79	2.26
46.	CADDYSHACK	3.0	R	Comedy	6/80	20.00
47.	CALIFORNIA DREAMING	3.0	R	Comedy	3/79	2.00
48.	CALIFORNIA SUITE	4.5	PG	Comedy	12/78	29.20
49.	CANDLESHOE	3.6	G	Suspense	2/78	7.23
50.	CAPRICORN ONE	3.8	PG	Advent.	6/78	12.00
51.	CARAVANS	3.5	PG	Advent.	11/78	1.97
52.	CASEY'S SHADOW	4.2	PG	Comedy	1/78	4.30
53.	CAT FROM OUTER SPACE	3.8	G	Comedy	6/78	8.47
54.	THE CHAMP	3.2	PG	Drama	4/79	12.60
55.	THE CHANGELING	3.0	R	Horror	3/80	5.30
56.	CHAPTER TWO	4.5	PG	Comedy	2/80	15.25
57.	CHEAP DETECTIVE	4.8	PG	Comedy	5/78	19.50
58.	CHEECH AND CHONG'S NEXT MOVIE	2.8	R	Comedy	6/80	21.00
59.	THE CHICKEN CHRONICLE	2.8	PG	Comedy	10/77	1.35
60.	THE CHINA SYNDROME	4.7	PG	Suspense	3/79	26.07
61.	THE CHOIRBOYS	2.2	R	Drama	12/77	7.63
62.	C.H.O.M.P.S.	2.7	PG	Action	6/79	1.80
63.	CIRCLE OF IRON	3.6	R	Action	1/79	1.00
64.	CLONUS HORROR	3.6	R	Sci-Fi	7/79	1.68
65.	CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	12/77	77.00
66.	COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER	4.5	PG	Biog.	3/80	36.00
67.	COMA	3.8	PG	Suspense	2/78	14.60
68.	COMES A HORSEMAN	3.8	PG	Western	10/78	4.19
69.	COMING HOME	5.0	R	Drama	2/78	13.39
70.	CONCORDE-AIRPORT '79	2.1	PG	Suspense	8/79	8.91
71.	CONVOY	3.0	PG	Action	6/78	9.53
72.	CORVETTE SUMMER	4.2	PG	Action	6/78	6.50
73.	CROSSED SWORDS	4.0	PG	Action	6/78	2.70
74.	CRUISING	2.6	R	Crime	2/80	6.99
75.	DAMNATION ALLEY	2.8	PG	Sci-Fi	10/77	5.03
76.	DEATH ON THE NILE	3.8	PG	Mystery	9/78	8.80
77.	DEATH SHIP	1.6	R	Horror	3/80	1.75

78.	THE DEER HUNTER	4.5	R	Drama	11/78	30.43
79.	DIE LAUGHING	2.2	PG	Comedy	3/80	1.75
80.	DIVINE MADNESS	4.8	R	Concert	9/80	1.90
81.	DRACULA	3.7	R	Horror	7/79	12.40
82.	DRESSED TO KILL	4.0	R	Suspense	7/80	15.00
83.	THE DRIVER	2.5	R	Action	7/78	2.25
84.	THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN	4.0	PG	Romance	12/79	30.92
85.	THE ELEPHANT MAN	4.8	PG	Drama	10/80	8.50
86.	THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	5/80	120.00
87.	THE END	3.2	R	Comedy	5/78	20.00
88.	ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ	4.2	PG	suspense	6/79	21.50
89.	EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE	3.3	PG	Action	12/78	51.80
90.	EYES OF LAURA MARS	4.0	R	Suspense	6/78	8.60
91.	FADE TO BLACK	2.8	R	Horror	10/80	2.45
92.	FAME	4.3	R	Musical	5/80	7.00
93.	FAST BREAK	3.8	PG	Comedy	2/79	9.00
94.	FATSO	3.2	PG	Comedy	2/80	3.75
95.	FFOLKES	3.4	PG	Action	4/80	1.72
96.	THE FIFTH FLOOR	2.0	R	Suspense	1/80	3.50
97.	THE FINAL COUNTDOWN	3.2	PG	Sci-Fi	8/80	6.20
98.	THE FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH	2.6	PG	Action	11/79	2.37
99.	F.I.S.T.	4.0	PG	Drama	4/78	9.50
100.	FM	3.6	PG	Comedy w/mus.	5/78	2.92
101.	THE FOG	3.2	R	Horror	1/80	11.00
102.	FOOLIN' AROUND	3.5	PG	Romance	3/80	1.30
103.	A FORCE OF ONE	3.3	PG	Action	5/79	9.98
104.	FORCE TEN FROM NAVARONE	4.0	PG	War	12/78	3.20
105.	FOUL PLAY	4.5	PG	Comedy	7/78	27.50
106.	FRIDAY THE 13th	1.0	R	Horror	5/80	16.50
107.	THE FRISCO KID	3.5	PG	Comedy	6/79	5.20
108.	THE FURY	3.4	R	Horror	3/78	12.17
109.	GAME OF DEATH	2.2	R	Action	6/79	3.85
110.	THE GAUNTLET	3.4	R	Action	12/77	17.60
111.	GILDA LIVE	4.0	R	Filmed Play	3/80	1.10
112.	GIRL FRIENDS	4.5	PG	Drama	5/78	1.00
113.	GLORIA	3.6	PG	Suspense	10/80	1.49
114.	GOIN' COCONUTS	3.5	PG	Comedy w/mus.	10/78	1.24
115.	GOING IN STYLE	3.3	PG	Comedy	12/79	13.90
116.	GOIN' SOUTH	3.3	PG	Western	10/78	4.77
117.	THE GONG SHOW MOVIE	4.0	R	Comedy	5/80	3.28
118.	THE GOODBYE GIRL	5.0	PG	Comedy	11/77	41.70
119.	GOOD GUYS WEAR BLACK	3.5	PG	Action	5/78	8.30
120.	GRAY LADY DOWN	3.2	PG	Advent.	3/78	4.06
121.	GREASE	4.8	PG	Comedy w/mus.	6/78	96.30
122.	THE GREAT SANTINI	4.5	PG	Drama	10/79	3.50
123.	THE GREAT TRAIN	4.5	PG	Crime	3/79	5.25
124.	THE GREEK TYCOON	3.2	R	Drama	5/78	8.26
125.	GUYANA: CULT OF THE DAMNED	1.2	R	Horror	1/80	1.78

126.	HAIR	4.7	PG	Musical	4/79	6.80
127.	HANOVER STREET	2.5	PG	Romance	5/79	1.50
128.	HARDCORE	3.8	R	Drama	2/79	7.03
129.	HEAVEN CAN WAIT	4.5	PG	Fantasy	6/79	49.40
130.	HE KNOWS YOUR'RE ALONE	1.5	R	Suspense	8/80	1.75
131.	HERBIE GOES BANANAS	3.5	G	Comedy	7/80	7.50
132.	HERE COME THE TIGERS	3.0	PG	Comedy	4/78	1.00
133.	HERO AT LARGE	3.1	PG	Comedy	2/80	5.50
134.	HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT	3.1	PG	Drama	3/80	1.50
135.	HIGH ANXIETY	4.6	PG	Comedy	12/77	19.16
136.	HIGH-BALLIN'	3.4	PG	Action	5/78	4.00
137.	THE HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS	1.6	R	Comedy	5/80	6.91
138.	HONEYSUCKLE ROSE	3.8	PG	Musical	7/80	9.60
139.	HOOPER	4.5	PG	Action	7/78	34.90
140.	HOPSCOTCH	4.2	R	Comedy	7/80	7.50
141.	HOT LEAD, COLD FEET	3.8	G	Western	7/78	10.45
142.	HOT STUFF	3.3	PG	Comedy	6/78	9.02
143.	HOUSE CALLS	3.4	PG	Comedy	3/78	16.62
144.	HOW TO BEAT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING	3.3	PG	Comedy	7/80	3.00
145.	THE HUNTER	2.3	PG	Drama	8/80	8.00
146.	HURRICANE	2.8	PG	Advent.	4/79	4.54
147.	ICE CASTLES	3.8	PG	Drama	12/78	9.50
148.	IF EVER I SEE YOU AGAIN	3.3	PG	Romance	5/78	2.90
149.	IN GOD WE TRUST	2.3	PG	Comedy	9/80	2.65
150.	THE IN-LAWS	4.1	PG	Comedy	6/79	18.90
151.	IN PRAISE OF OLDER WOMEN	3.2	R	Drama	1/79	1.15
152.	INTERIORS	4.6	PG	Drama	8/78	4.51
153.	INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS	4.3	PG	Sci-Fi	12/78	11.13
154.	THE ISLAND	1.8	R	Horror	6/80	9.60
155.	IT LIVES AGAIN	3.0	R	Horror	5/78	1.50
156.	IT'S MY TURN	3.6	R	Drama	10/80	5.52
157.	I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND	4.0	PG	Comedy w/mus.	4/78	1.17
158.	JAWS II	3.8	PG	Suspense	6/78	55.61
159.	JENNIFER	3.0	PG	Horror	2/78	1.00
160.	THE JERK	3.4	R	Comedy	12/79	43.00
161.	JESUS	2.3	G	Biblical	10/79	7.10
162.	JULIA	4.8	PG	Drama	10/77	13.06
163.	JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT	3.2	R	Romance	2/80	1.00
164.	JUST YOU AND ME KID	3.3	PG	Comedy	7/79	3.85
165.	THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT	3.6	PG	Musical	6/79	1.50
166.	KING OF THE GYPSIES	3.2	R	Drama	12/78	4.01
167.	KRAMER VS. KRAMER	5.0	PG	Drama	12/79	60.53
168.	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES	4.3	R	Comedy	3/79	6.78
169.	LAST FLIGHT OF NOAH'S ARK	3.0	G	Comedy	7/80	4.00
170.	THE LAST MARRIED COUPLE IN AMERICA	3.1	R	Comedy	2/80	7.17
171.	LAST WALTZ	4.8	PG	Musical	4/78	2.50

172.	LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH	4.0	PG	Docum.	12/77	13.14
173.	THE LEGACY	2.4	R	Suepsne	10/79	5.21
174.	THE LIFE OF BRIAN	4.2	R	Comedy	7/79	10.10
175.	LITTLE DRAWLINGS	3.5	\$	Drama	3/80	16.70
176.	LITTLE MISS MARKER	3.5	PG	Comedy	3/80	3.70
177.	A LITTLE ROMANCE	4.4	PG	Comedy	4/79	4.00
178.	THE LONG RIDERS	3.8	R	Western	5/80	5.90
179.	THE LORD OF THE RINGS	4.3	PG	Animated	11/78	13.80
180.	LOST AND FOUND	3.1	PG	Comedy	6/79	1.80
181.	LOVE AT FIRST BITE	4.0	PG	Comedy	4/79	20.60
182.	LOVING COUPLES	3.4	PG	Comedy	10/80	1.50
183.	MADAME ROSA	4.3	PG	Drama	4/78	1.68
184.	MAGIC	2.8	R	Suspense	11/78	13.27
185.	THE MAIN EVENT	2.8	PG	Comedy	6/79	26.30
186.	MALIBU BEACH	3.5	R	Comedy	5/78	1.75
187.	MANHATTEN	5.0	R	Comedy	3/79	16.96
188.	THE MANITOU	3.4	PG	Horror	2/78	1.50
189.	MEATBALLS	3.1	PG	Comedy	7/79	21.20
190.	THE MEDUSA TOUCH	3.6	PG	Suspense	2/78	1.00
191.	MESSAGE FROM SPACE	3.2	PG	Sci-Fi	11/79	1.17
192.	METEOR	2.8	PG	Suspense	10/79	4.20
193.	MIDDLE AGE CRAZY	3.0	R	Comedy	8/80	6.00
194.	MIDNIGHT EXPRESS	3.8	R	Drama	5/78	15.31
195.	MIDNIGHT MADNESS	2.8	PG	Action	2/80	1.50
196.	MOMENT BY MOMENT	2.3	R	Romance	12/78	8.18
197.	MOONRAKER	3.5	PG	Action	6/79	33.93
198.	MORE AMERICAN GRAFFITI	3.6	PG	Comedy	7/79	9.78
199.	MOTEL HELL	2.3	R	Horror	10/80	1.44
200.	MOUNTAIN FAMILY ROBINSON	3.2	G	Outdoor	12/79	4.81
201.	THE MUPPET MOVIE	3.5	G	Comedy w/mus.	5/79	32.00
202.	MURDER BY DECREE	4.0	PG	Mystery	2/79	3.10
203.	MY BODYGUARD	3.8	PG	Comedy	7/80	9.50
204.	MY BRILLIANT CAREER	4.5	G	Romance	2/80	1.28
205.	NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE	3.8	R	Comedy	6/78	74.00
206.	NIGHTWING	3.0	PG	Mystery	7/79	3.75
207.	1941	3.0	PG	Comedy	12/79	23.40
208.	NORMA RAE	4.6	PG	Drama	3/79	11.41
209.	THE NORSEMAN	3.0	PG	Action	6/78	1.00
210.	NORTH AVENUE IRREGULARS	3.8	G	Comedy	2/79	9.93
211.	NORTH DALLAS FORTY	4.5	R	Comedy	8/79	16.10
212.	THE NUDE BOMB	2.8	PG	Comedy	5/80	8.17
213.	THE OCTAGON	3.5	R	Action	8/80	9.40
214.	OH, GOD	4.0	PG	Comedy	10/77	31.44
215.	OH GOD, BOOK II	3.2	PG	Comedy	10/80	7.00
216.	OH HEAVENLY DOG	3.3	PG	Comedy	8/80	3.75
217.	OLIVER'S STORY	3.3	PG	Romance	12/78	8.46
218.	OMEN II: DAMIEN	3.6	R	Horror	6/78	13.63
219.	THE ONION FIELD	4.3	R	Crime	5/79	5.00
220.	ORDINARY PEOPLE	5.0	R	Drama	9/80	13.00
221.	THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN, PART II	4.0	PG	Drama	2/78	7.34

222.	OUR WINNING SEASON	4.0	PG	Comedy	6/78	1.00
223.	PARADISE ALLEY	3.3	PG	Drama	9/78	5.73
224.	PETE'S DRAGON	4.4	G	Animated	12/77	16.10
225.	PHANTASM	3.4	R	Horror	3/79	6.00
226.	A PIECE OF THE ACTION	4.0	PG	Comedy	10/77	6.70
227.	POPEYE	2.2	PG	Comedy w/mus.	12/80	12.00
228.	PRETTY BABY	3.4	R	Drama	4/78	4.20
229.	PRISONER OF ZENDA	2.8	PG	Comedy	5/79	4.89
230.	PRIVATE BENJAMIN	3.0	R	Comedy	10/80	33.50
231.	THE PROMISE	2.6	PG	Drama	11/79	6.47
232.	PROPHECY	1.7	PG	Horror	6.79	10.50
233.	QUADROPHENIA	4.1	R	Drama w/mus.	11/79	1.05
234.	RABBIT TEST	2.4	PG	Comedy	2/78	4.70
235.	RAISE THE TITANIC	2.4	PG	Advent.	8/80	6.80
236.	RESURRECTION	4.5	PG	Drama	9/80	1.23
237.	RETURN FROM WITCH MOUNTAIN	3.6	G	Fantasy	4/78	7.38
238.	REVENGE OF THE PINK PANTHER	3.4	PG	Comedy	6/78	25.00
239.	ROADIE	3.2	PG	Musican	6/80	1.46
240.	ROCKY II	3.8	PG	Drama	6/79	43.05
241.	ROUGH CUT	3.0	PG	Comedy	6/80	10.00
242.	RUNNING	3.3	PG	Action	12/79	4.00
243.	SAME TIME NEXT YEAR	3.8	PG	Romance	11/78	13.46
244.	SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY	3.3	PG	Musical	7/78	12.96
245.	SATURN 3	3.0	R	Sci-Fi	2/80	4.90
246.	SCAVENGER HUNT	1.8	PG	Action	12/79	3.80
247.	THE SEA GYPSIES	4.4	G	Outdoor	4/78	1.20
248.	THE SEDUCTION OF JOE TYNAN	4.2	R	Political	8/79	11.41
249.	THE SERIAL	3.7	R	Comedy	3/80	5.60
250.	THE SHINING	3.4	R	Horror	5/80	30.20
251.	THE SILENT SCREAM	2.5	R	Horror	11/79	7.90
252.	SIMON	3.8	PG	Comedy	2/80	2.73
253.	SKATETOWN, U.S.A.	3.7	PG	Musical	10/79	2.35
254.	SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT PART II	2.0	PG	Comedy	8/80	37.60
255.	SOMEBODY KILLED HER HUSBAND	3.0	PG	Romance	9/78	1.85
256.	SOMEWHERE IN TIME	4.7	PG	Romance	10/80	4.00
257.	STAR CRASH	1.7	PG	Sci-Fi	3/79	2.25
258.	STARDUST MEMORIES	4.2	PG	Comedy	9/80	3.65
259.	STARTING OVER	4.1	R	Romance	10/79	19.10
260.	STAR TREK	3.5	G	Sci-Fi	12/79	56.00
261.	STAR WARS	4.6	PG	Sci-Fi	6/77	175.69
262.	STINGRAY	3.0	PG	Action	6/78	1.10
263.	STRAIGHT TIME	3.0	R	Drama	3/78	4.20
264.	SUMMER CAMP	2.0	R	Comedy	5/79	1.47
265.	SUPERMAN	5.0	PG	Action	12/78	82.50
266.	THE SWARM	2.8	PG	Horror	7/78	7.70
267.	TELEFON	3.4	PG	Suspense	12/77	4.35
268.	10	4.4	R	Comedy	9/79	25.00

269.	TERROR TRAIN	3.8	R	Suspense	10/80	3.50
270.	THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY	3.8	PG	Comedy w/mus.	5/78	7.30
271.	TIME AFTER TIME	4.2	PG	Sci-Fi	9/79	6.30
272.	TOM HORN	3.2	R	Western	4/80	4.30
273.	THE TURNING POINT	4.8	PG	Drama	11/77	17.06
274.	UNIDENTIFIED FLYING ODDBALL	3.7	G	Comedy	7/79	4.48
275.	AN UNMARRIED WOMAN	4.8	R	Drama	3/78	13.62
276.	UP IN SMOKE	3.7	R	Comedy	9/78	28.30
277.	URBAN COWBOY	3.5	PG	Drama	6/80	22.70
278.	USED CARS	2.8	R	Comedy	7/80	5.26
279.	THE VILLAIN	2.2	PG	Western	7/79	9.93
280.	VOICES	3.4	PG	Romance	3/79	1.00
281.	THE WANDERERS	3.2	R	Drama	7/79	2.00
282.	WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS	3.3	PG	Fantasy	7/78	1.60
283.	THE WARRIORS	3.8	R	Action	2/79	14.50
284.	WATERSHIP DOWN	4.5	PG	Animated	9/78	3.50
285.	A WEDDING	3.5	PG	Comedy	9/78	4.79
286.	WHEN A STRANGER CALLS	3.8	R	Horror	9/79	11.40
287.	WHEN TIME RAN OUT	2.5	PG	Advent.	4/80	1.70
288.	WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM	2.0	R	Comedy	4/80	4.20
289.	WHICH WAY IS UP?	2.8	R	Comedy	11/77	9.56
290.	WHO IS KILLING THE GREAT CHEFS OF EUROPE?	4.5	PG	Comedy	9/78	6.00
291.	WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN	4.0	R	Action	8/78	2.50
292.	WHOLLY MOSES	2.4	PG	Comedy	6/80	7.53
293.	THE WILDERNESS FAMILY PART II	3.3	G	Outdoor	12/78	5.53
294.	THE WILD GEESE	3.7	R	Action	5/78	3.50
295.	THE WIZ	4.5	G	Musical	10/78	13.61
296.	WORLD'S GREATEST LOVER	3.6	PG	Comedy	12/77	10.65
297.	XANADU	3.0	PG	Musical	8/80	10.20
298.	YANKS	4.5	R	War	9/79	1.58
299.	YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE	3.4	PG	Comedy	8/77	8.40
300.	YOUNGBLOOD	4.3	R	Action	2/78	1.00



APPENDIX II

Highest Ranked Films by Critical Ratings

Movie Title	Critic Rating	MPAA Rating	Type of Film	Mon. of Release	Rental Amount
1. THE GOODBYE GIRL	5.0	PG	Comedy	Nov.	41.70
2. AIRPLANE	5.0	PG	Comedy	July	38.00
3. SUPERMAN	5.0	PG	Action	Dec.	82.50
4. KRAMER VS. KRAMER	5.0	PG	Drama	Dec.	60.53
5. MANHATTEN	5.0	R	Comedy	Mar.	16.96
6. COMING HOME	5.0	R	Drama	Feb.	13.39
7. ORDINARY PEOPLE	5.0	R	Drama	Sep.	13.00
8. JULIA	4.8	PG	Drama	Oct.	13.06
9. AN UNMARRIED WOMAN	4.8	R	Drama	Mar.	13.62
10. THE TURNING POINT	4.8	PG	Drama	Nov.	17.06
11. BEING THERE	4.8	PG	Comedy	Dec.	10.80
12. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	Dec.	77.00
13. GREASE	4.8	PG	Comedy w/mus.	June	96.30
14. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	May	120.00
15. CHEAP DETECTIVE	4.8	PG	Comedy	May	19.50
16. AUTUMN SONATA	4.8	PG	Drama	Oct.	2.00
17. DIVINE MADNESS--BETTE MIDLER	4.8	R	Concert	Sep.	1.90
18. THE LAST WALTZ	4.8	PG	Musical	Apr.	2.50
19. ELEPHANT MAN	4.8	PG	Drama	Oct.	8.50
20. HAIR	4.7	PG	Musical	Apr.	6.80
21. SOMEWHERE IN TIME	4.7	PG	Romance	Oct.	4.00
22. CHINA SYNDROME	4.7	PG	Suspense	Mar.	26.07
23. STAR WARS	4.6	PG	Sci-Fi	June	175.69
24. NORMA RAE	4.6	PG	Drama	Mar.	11.41
25. HIGH ANXIETY	4.6	PG	Comedy	Dec.	19.16
26. INTERIORS	4.6	PG	Drama	Aug.	4.51
27. BLUE COLLAR	4.6	R	Drama	Feb.	3.03
28. YANKS	4.5	R	War	Sep.	1.58
29. GIRL FRIENDS	4.5	PG	Drama	May	1.00
30. ALICE SWEET ALICE	4.5	R	Horror	Sep.	1.09
31. MY BRILLIANT CAREER	4.5	G	Romance	Feb.	1.28
32. RESURRECTION	4.5	PG	Drama	Sep.	1.23
33. WHO IS KILLING THE GREAT CHEFS OF EUROPE?	4.5	PG	Comedy	Sep.	6.00

## APPENDIX II

(continued)

34. THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY	4.5	PG	Crime	Mar.	5.25
35. THE GREAT SANTINI	4.5	PG	Drama	Oct.	3.50
36. WATERSHIP DOWN	4.5	PG	Animated	Sep.	3.50
37. THE WIZ	4.5	G	Musical	Oct.	13.61
38. CHAPTER TWO	4.5	PG	Comedy	Feb.	15.25
39. NORTH DALLAS FORTY	4.5	R	Comedy	Aug.	16.10
40. HEAVEN CAN WAIT	4.5	PG	Fantasy	June	49.40
41. APOCALYPSE NOW	4.5	R	War	Aug.	36.85
42. COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER	4.5	PG	Biography	Mar.	36.00
43. THE MUPPET MOVIE	4.5	G	Comedy w/mus.	May	32.00
44. HOOPER	4.5	PG	Action	July	34.90
45. CALIFORNIA SUITE	4.5	PG	Comedy	Dec.	29.20
46. DEER HUNTER	4.5	R	Drama	Nov.	30.43
47. FOUL PLAY	4.5	PG	Comedy	July	27.50

Mean Critical Rating 4.67

Total Rental Am't. 1,244.66  
(34.6% of total for all films)

## APPENDIX II

(continued)

## Lowest Ranked Films by Critical Ratings

Movie Title	Critic Rating	MPAA Rating	Type of Film	Mon. of Release	Rental Amount
1. FRIDAY THE 13th	1.0	R	Horror	May	16.50
2. GUYANA: CULT OF THE DAMNED	1.2	R	Horror	Jan.	1.78
3. HE KNOWS YOU'RE ALONE	1.5	R	Suspense	Aug.	1.75
4. DEATH SHIP	1.6	R	Horror	Mar.	1.75
5. HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS	1.6	R	Comedy	May	6.91
6. STAR CRASH	1.7	PG	Sci-Fi	Mar.	2.25
7. PROPHECY	1.7	PG	Horror	June	10.50
8. THE ISLAND	1.8	R	Horror	June	9.60
9. SCAVENGER HUNT	1.8	PG	Action	Dec.	3.80
10. WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM	2.0	PG	Comedy	Apr.	4.20
11. FFOLKES	2.0	PG	Suspense	Apr.	3.50
12. SUMMER CAMP	2.0	R	Comedy	May	1.47
13. SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT II	2.0	PG	Comedy	Aug.	37.60
14. BLOODLINE	2.1	R	Mystery	June	5.37
15. CONCORDE: AIRPORT '79	2.1	PG	Suspense	Aug.	8.91
16. CHOIRBOYS	2.2	R	Drama	Dec.	7.63
17. GAME OF DEATH	2.2	R	Action	June	3.85
18. DIE LAUGHING	2.2	PG	Comedy w/mus.	Mar.	1.75
19. THE VILLAIN	2.2	PG	Western	July	9.93
20. POPEYE	2.2	PG	Comedy w/mus.	Dec.	12.00
21. MOTEL HELL	2.3	R	Horror	Oct.	1.44
22. IN GOD WE TRUST	2.3	PG	Comedy	Sep.	2.65
23. AMERICATHON	2.3	PG	Comedy	Aug.	2.43
24. THE HUNTER	2.3	PG	Drama	Aug.	8.00
25. JESUS	2.3	G	Biblical	Oct.	7.10
26. MOMENT BY MOMENT	2.3	R	Romance	Dec.	8.18
27. WHOLLY MOSES	2.4	PG	Comedy	June	7.753
28. THE LEGACY	2.4	R	Suspense	Oct.	5.21
29. RAISE THE TITANIC	2.4	PG	Advent.	Aug.	6.80
30. RABBIT TEST	2.4	PG	Comedy	Feb.	4.70
31. THE AWAKENING	2.4	R	Horror	Sept.	4.25
Mean Critical Rating	2.03		Total Rental Amount		209.34
			(5.8% of total for all films)		

## APPENDIX II

(continued)

## Highest Ranked Films by Rental Amounts

Movie Title	Critic Rating	MPAA Rating	Type of Film	Mon. of Release	Rental Amount
1. STAR WARS	4.6	PG	Sci-Fi	June	175.69
2. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	May	120.00
3. GREASE	4.8	PG	Comedy w/mus.	June	96.30
4. SUPERMAN	5.0	PG	Action	Dec.	82.50
5. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND	4.8	PG	Sci-Fi	Dec.	77.00
6. NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE	3.8	R	Comedy	June	74.00
7. KRAMER VS. KRAMER	5.0	PG	Drama	Dec.	60.53
8. STAR TREK	3.5	G	Sci-Fi	Dec.	56.00
9. JAWS II	3.8	PG	Suspense	June	55.61
10. EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE	3.3	PG	Action	Dec.	51.80
11. HEAVEN CAN WAIT	4.5	PG	Fantasy	June	49.40
12. ROCKY II	3.8	PG	Drama	June	43.05
13. THE JERK	3.4	R	Comedy	Dec.	43.00
14. THE GOODBYE GIRL	5.0	PG	Comedy	Nov.	41.70
15. ALIEN	4.2	R	Sci-Fi	May	40.09
16. AIRPLANE	5.0	PG	Comedy	July	38.00
17. SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT II	2.0	PG	Comedy	Aug.	37.60
18. APOCALYPSE NOW	4.5	R	War	Aug.	36.85
19. COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER	4.5	PG	Biography	Mar.	36.00
20. AMITYVILLE HORROR	3.0	R	Horror	July	35.00
21. HOPPER	4.5	PG	Action	July	34.90
22. MOONRAKER	3.5	PG	Action	June	33.93
23. PRIVATE BENJAMIN	3.0	R	Comedy	Oct.	33.50
24. THE MUPPET MOVIE	4.5	G	Comedy w/mus.	May	32.00
25. OH GOD	4.0	PG	Comedy	Oct.	31.44
26. BLUES BROTHERS	3.4	R	Comedy	June	31.00
27. THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN	4.0	PG	Romance	Dec.	30.92
28. THE DEER HUNTER	4.5	R	Drama	Nov.	30.43
29. THE SHINING	3.4	R	Horror	May	30.20
30. CALIFORNIA SUITE	4.5	PG	Comedy	Dec.	29.20

Mean Critical Rating 4.09

Total Rental Am't. 1,567.64  
(43.5% of total for all films)

## APPENDIX II

(continued)

## Lowest Ranked Films by Rental Amounts

Movie Title	Critic Rating	MPAA Rating	Type of Film	Mon. of Release	Rental Amount
1. NORSEMAN	3.0	PG	Action	June	1.00
2. CIRCLE OF IRON	3.6	R	Action	Jan.	1.00
3. MEDUSA TOUCH	3.6	PG	Suspense	Feb.	1.00
4. VOICES	3.4	PG	Romance	Mar.	1.00
5. JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT	3.2	R	Comedy	Feb.	1.00
6. HERE COME THE TIGERS	3.0	PG	Comedy	Apr.	1.00
7. JENNIFER	3.0	PG	Horror	Feb.	1.00
8. GIRL FRIENDS	4.5	PG	Drama	May	1.00
9. YOUNGBLOOD	4.3	R	Action	Feb.	1.00
10. OUT WINNING SEASON	4.0	PG	Comedy	June	1.00
11. QUADROPHENIA	4.1	R	Drama w/mus.	Nov.	1.05
12. ALICE SWEET ALICE	4.5	R	Horror	Sep.	1.09
13. GILDA LIVE	4.5	R	Film Play	Mar.	1.10
14. STINGRAY	3.0	PG	Action	June	1.10
15. IN PRAISE OF OLDER WOMEN	3.2	R	Drama	Jan.	1.15
16. MESSAGE FROM SPACE	3.2	PG	Sci-Fi	Nov.	1.17
17. I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND	4.0	PG	Comedy w/mus.	Apr.	1.17
18. SEA GYPSIES	4.4	G	Outdoor	Apr.	1.20
19. RESURRECTION	4.5	PG	Drama	Sep.	1.23
20. GOIN' COCONUTS	3.5	PG	Comedy w/mus.	Oct.	1.24
21. MY BRILLIANT CAREER	4.5	G	Romance	Feb.	1.28
22. FOOLIN' AROUND	3.5	PG	Romance	Mar.	1.30
23. CHICKEN CHRONICLES	2.8	PG	Comedy	Oct.	1.35
24. BIG WEDNESDAY	3.8	PG	Comedy	May	1.40
25. MOTEL HELL	2.3	R	Horror	Oct.	1.44
26. ROADIE	3.2	PG	Musical	June	1.46
27. SUMMER CAMP	2.0	R	Comedy	May	1.47
28. GLORIA	3.6	PG	Suspense	Oct.	1.49
29. THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT	3.6	PG	Musical	June	1.50
30. LOVING COUPLES	3.4	PG	Comedy	Oct.	1.50
31. MANITOU	3.4	PG	Horror	Feb.	1.50
32. IT LIVES AGAIN	3.0	R	Horror	May	1.50
33. HANOVER STREET	2.5	PG	Romance	May	1.50
34. MIDNIGHT MADNESS	2.8	PG	Action	Feb.	1.50
35. HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT	3.8	PG	Drama	Mar.	1.50
Mean Critical Rating	3.49				
			Total Rental Am't.		43.19
			(1.2% of total for all films)		

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