

MASTER THESIS

ONLINE VS OFFLINE

JORDY DE GROOT
336134

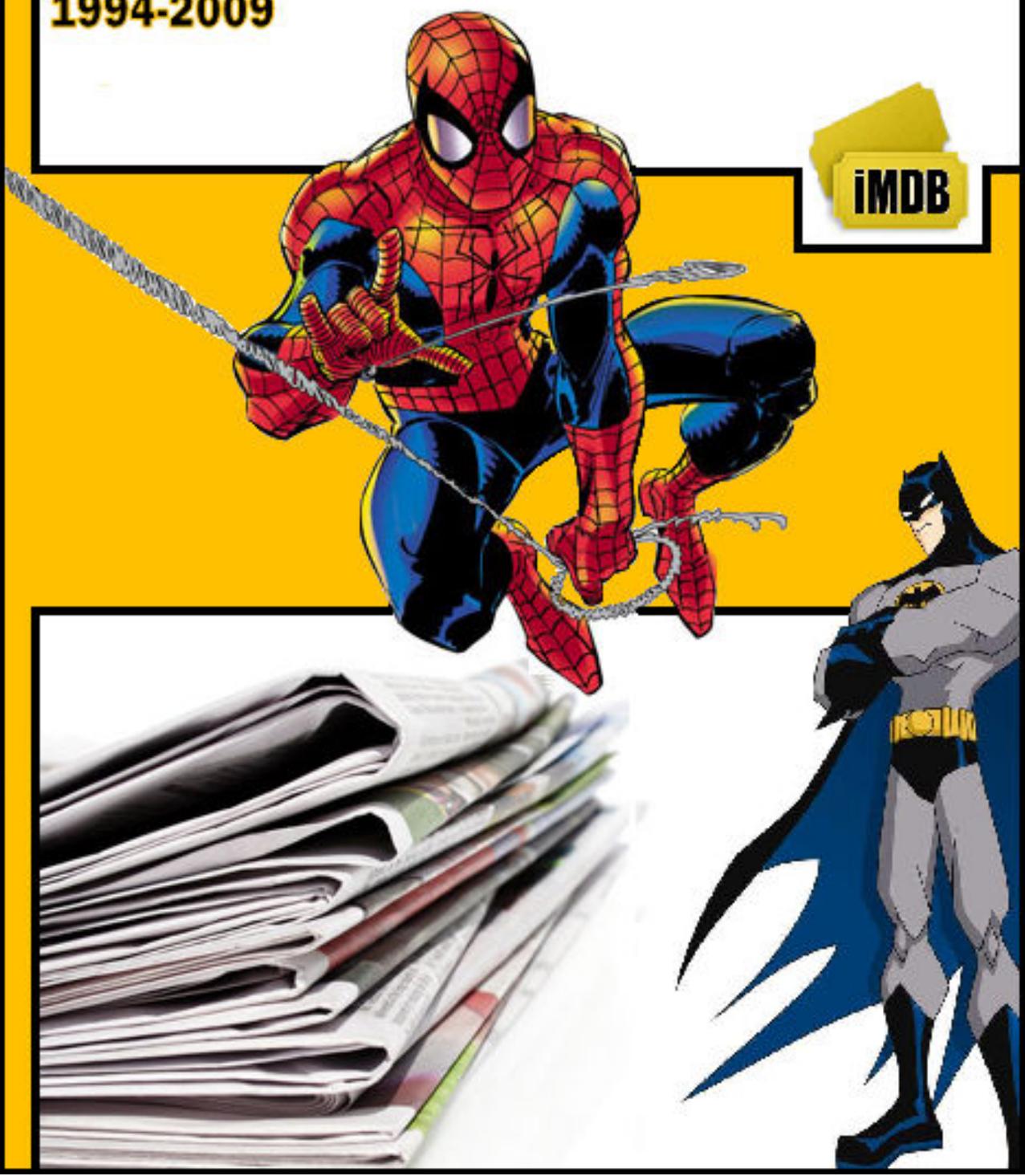


ONLINE VS OFFLINE



Comparatief onderzoek naar 'user generated reviews' en professionele recensies, op het gebied van de 'comic book adaptation', 1994-2009

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Voorwoord

Door middel van deze thesis sluit ik mijn Master Media en Journalistiek af. Het was een logische vervolgopleiding, na mijn afgeronde bachelor theater- film, televisiewetenschappen en nieuwe media, aan de Universiteit Utrecht. In Utrecht lag de focus op de invloed van media op de maatschappij en andersom. Dit is een aspect dat ik altijd zeer interessant heb gevonden. Voor wat betreft deze thesis was het mij dan ook duidelijk dat ik mij hier wederom mee bezig ging houden. Nu moest echter nog gekeken worden hoe mijn interesses voor (specifiek) film en nieuwe media met bovenstaand gedachtegoed te combineren vielen? Comparatief onderzoek bleek het antwoord waarmee ik aan de slag kon gaan voor mijn thesis. Comparatief onderzoek tussen online filmrecensies en professionele recensies geplaatst in Amerikaanse gerenommeerde dagbladen. Al mijn academische interesses vielen op hun plaats binnen dit onderzoek. Er was echter één probleem; ik wilde te veel. Er kon niet zomaar een vergelijking getrokken worden tussen de twee verschillende soorten recensies, zonder het onderzoeksgebied af te bakenen. Om deze reden is dan ook gekozen om mij te richten op één specifiek genre: de *Comic Book Adaptation*. Op deze manier kon ik zelfs mijn favoriete filmgenre betrekken bij mijn onderzoek en heb ik mij de afgelopen maanden dan ook geen moment hoeven te vervelen. Al met al ben ik tevreden met het eindresultaat en zeer tevreden met het proces dat daaraan voorafging.

Natuurlijk zijn er een aantal mensen die mij bij het schrijven van deze thesis hebben geholpen. Om deze reden wil ik deze mensen dan ook graag binnen dit voorwoord bedanken voor hun hulp. Allereerst wil ik Annemarie Kersten bedanken voor haar begeleiding tijdens het schrijven van deze thesis. Daarnaast bedank ik ook mijn tweede lezer Marc Verboord. Verder wil ik mijn ouders en mijn vriendin bedanken voor hun hulp en steun gedurende deze hele periode. Als laatste wil ik ook graag Roy de Lepper bedanken, voor zijn hulp bij het vervaardigen van het codeerschema, gebruikt binnen deze thesis.

"Rorschach's Journal. October 12th, 1985:

Dog carcass in Alley this morning, tire tread on burst stomach. This city is afraid of me. I have seen its true face. The streets are extended gutters and the gutters are full of blood and when the drains finally scab over, all the vermin will drown. The accumulated filth of all their sex and murder will foam up about their waists and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout 'save us!' ...and I'll whisper 'no' ..."

Watchmen, 1986

Watchmen, 2008

Inhoudsopgave

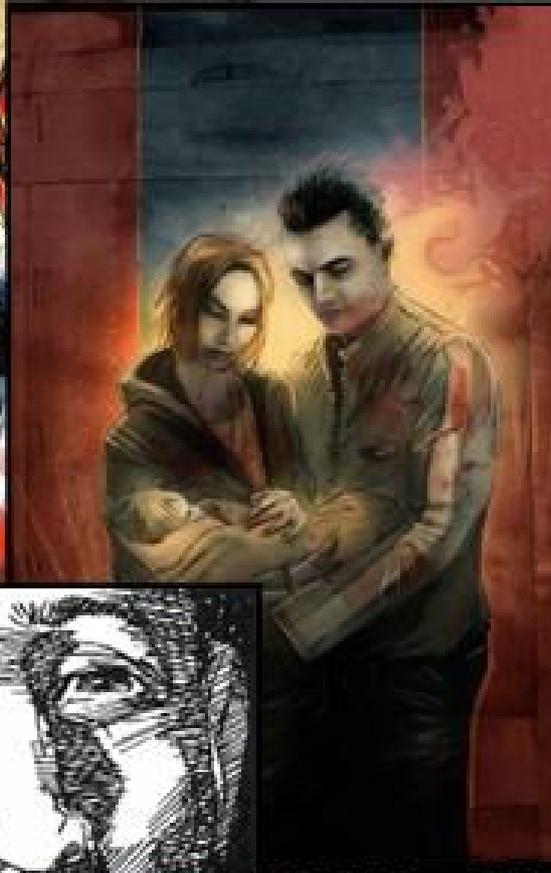
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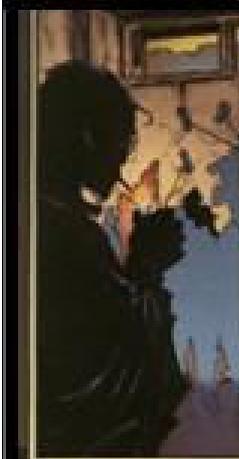
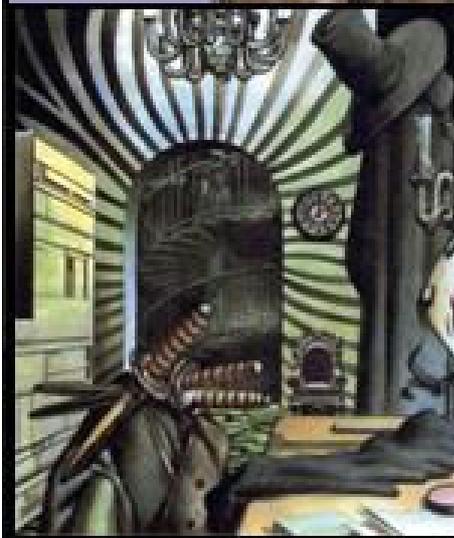


HARVY PREKAT
THE GUY WHO
THE OTHER GUY WHO
WENT DOWN I KNOW THE GUY
PERIOD AND HE UNDERSTANDS
YOU CAN COMPLAIN TO
ANY SUBJECT.

AMERICAN SPLENDOR



THAT WHAT
YOU WANT JOEY?
THAT WHAT YOU
WANT? WHAT YOU
WANT?



WHAT
ARE YOU
PLANNING
TO DO,
NEXT?



ERAZOR **GLORY**
THE GREAT
SWORDSMAN

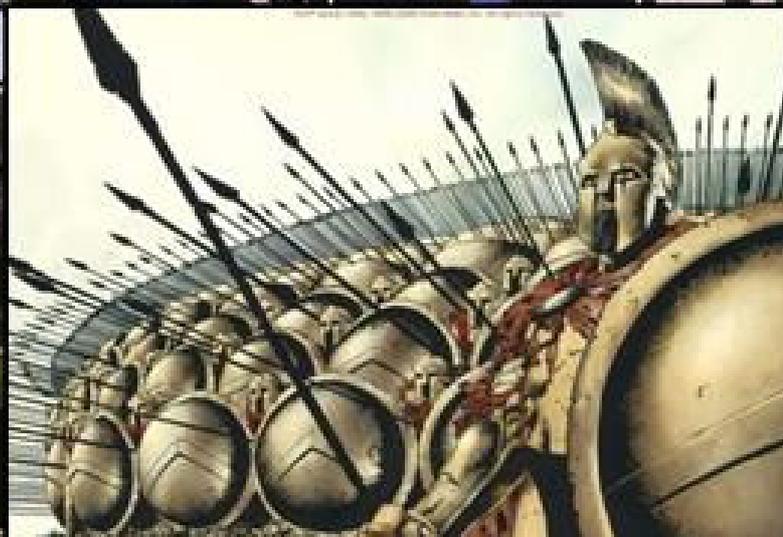
I DON'T
WANT TO HEAR
IT COO. I WHO
WANT I HAD TO
DO. SHE WAS A
COLD-BLOODED
KILLER.

I KNOW
YOU THINK
I'M A
BUT I'M
NOT
YOUR
BROTHER
OR
SISTER.

I MANAGED
TO DO COOL
THINGS
ON THE
STREETS
OF THE
CITY.
I'M
THE
BEST
AT
WHAT
I
DO.

IT'S
OVER
COO.

THAT'S
JUST
THE
WAY
OF
DIE.



1. Inleiding

1.1 Onderwerp

Cultuurproducten, waaronder films, beschikken niet over intrinsieke eigenschappen die bepalen hoe zij gewaardeerd worden – of zij tot de hoge kunsten of tot entertainment worden gerekend. De waardering die zij ontvangen komt tot stand vanuit een sociale constructie. De waarden die aan culturele producten worden toegekend (waarmee culturele producten worden ingedeeld in kunst en niet-kunst, of goede en slechte smaak) worden onder andere gevormd door een gespecialiseerd veld van betrokkenen in het culturele veld zelf. Één van de belangrijkste beoordelingsinstanties, binnen deze culturele velden, betreft de journalistieke kunstkritiek in internationale dagbladen (Bourdieu, 1984). De rol van critici in de kunst- en cultuurkritiek is door verschillende auteurs beschreven en geanalyseerd. Veelal wordt deze rol beschreven aan de hand van de veldtheorie van Bourdieu (1984). Deze journalistieke kunstkritiek (de critici) zou zich in het zogenaamde 'restricted field' bevinden, dat binnen het complete veld van culturele productie ligt. In dit 'restricted field' is classificatie wellicht één van de belangrijkste 'mechanismen' voor het beoordelen van verschillende cultuurproducten op kwaliteit (Van Rees, Vermunt & Verboord, 1999; Van Rees, Janssen & Verboord, 2006). Het kan gezien worden als een logische ordening van het culturele/kunstzinnige aanbod. Hier kan men denken aan een schikking van genres of verschillende kunststromingen. Daarnaast wordt gebruik gemaakt van specifieke waarderings waarmee bepaalde kunststromingen kunnen worden ingedeeld als zijnde hoge of lage kunstvormen. Zo kan Opera bijvoorbeeld worden gecategoriseerd als hoge kunstvorm en kan popmuziek geschaard worden onder lage kunst, oftewel populaire cultuur.

Binnen de samenleving is er dus een gespecialiseerde 'eenheid' van mensen die zich met deze classificaties bezig houden: de critici. Het is belangrijk dat deze critici een 'gatekeeper' functie ten opzichte van smaak en kwaliteit hanteren, om verschillende redenen (Bourdieu, 1984). Deze redenen kunnen strekken van culturele scholing, tot 'de vorming van een nationaal of cultureel karakter' aan de hand van smaakpatronen en voorkeuren (Van Rees, Janssen & Verboord, 2006). Binnen de kunstkritiek dienen de critici hun waardeoordelen dan ook te baseren op een esthetische dispositie. Deze dispositie, zoals beschreven door Bourdieu (1984), gaat uit van een geleerde kijk op culturele en kunstzinnige producten, waarbij afstand wordt genomen van 'het directe' (populair vermaak). Hierbij wordt vorm boven functie geplaatst en dienen zowel culturele, als kunstzinnige producten een autonoom bestaan te leiden en ook zo beoordeeld te worden. Deze esthetische dispositie zou volgens Bourdieu dan ook alleen zijn voorbehouden aan personen uit hogere klassen en mensen met een hogere opleiding (Bourdieu, 1984: 28). Dit omdat zij een kritische blik hebben kunnen aanleren binnen hun opleiding en een kritische blik hebben meegekregen vanuit hun sociaal milieu. Alleen zij zouden kunst kunnen beoordelen op basis van vorm boven functie en kunnen dus de werkelijke esthetische waarde van producten

'zien' (Bourdieu, 1984).

De waardering van culturele genres is geen statisch gegeven, maar kan zich ontwikkelen. Zo heeft film in de 20^{ste} eeuw een ontwikkeling doorgemaakt van vorm van ordinair volksvermaak tot gewaardeerd cultuurproduct met de mogelijkheid tot 'hoge kunst' benoemd te worden. Film werd vanaf de jaren zestig steeds meer gezien als een legitieme kunstvorm (Baumann, 2001). Het werd steeds meer gezien als een respectabeler product, waardoor ook film ingedeeld kon gaan worden naar verschillende classificaties, zoals hoge kunst en/of lage kunst. Het kritisch discours hieromtrent is sinds de jaren zestig dan ook onderhevig geweest aan verandering, richting de legitimering van film als kunstobject in tegenstelling tot film als middel tot vermaak (Baumann, 2001). Deze duidelijke grens tussen 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst, opgesteld door de critici die de producten beoordelen, lijkt de laatste jaren echter weer te vervagen door de opkomst van een nieuw communicatiemiddel en de mogelijkheden hiervan: het internet (web 2.0). Niet alleen kunnen gerenommeerde critici 'hun ei kwijt', maar de 'gewone consument' heeft op dit platform ook een stem gekregen. Alle mensen in het bezit van een computer met internetverbinding zijn vrij om 'content' toe te voegen op dit platform, en vrij om de content van anderen te bekritisieren of bejubelen. Niet langer zijn alleen gerenommeerde critici, beschikkend over een esthetische dispositie, de beoordelaars van kunst en cultuur, maar ook 'het gewone volk' kan zich deze rol toeëigenen. De vraag is of dit een goed gegeven is? Waar ik mij binnen mijn onderzoek dan ook op richt is de vraag of de wijdverspreide consensus betreffende de rol van de criticus in gevaar is gekomen door de opkomst van web 2.0 en de applicaties die dit medium dragen. Dit wordt gedaan door de recensies van de professionele critici te vergelijken met recensies, betreffende dezelfde producten, geplaatst door de 'gebruikers' van het internet. Hierbij wordt gelet op taalgebruik, het gebruikte discours en contextuele aspecten die van belang zijn bij de bespreking van het product. Hierbij heb ik mij gericht op filmrecensies, omdat dit een populaire culturele graadmeter is en omdat er veel online mogelijkheden zijn om deze recensies te plaatsen. Daarnaast bevatten filmrecensies in gerenommeerde dagbladen actuele informatie, worden ze wijd verspreid en geven ze directe waardeoordelen over 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst (David & Pinch, 2005; van Noord, 2008).

De waarden die aan culturele producten worden gegeven kunnen, in het geval van films, van belang voor het uiteindelijk 'succes' van de film. Bovenstaande geldt simpelweg omdat (representatieve) reviews en beoordelingen invloed hebben op het keuzepatroon van de gemiddelde consument (Tancer, 2009). Het kritisch discours betreffende deze films, geleverd door onder andere professionele filmcritici, heeft dus altijd kunnen dienen als graadmeter voor smaakpatronen van het publiek en winst in aanzien. Nu is het echter mogelijk geworden voor de 'gewone burger' om zich ook te mengen binnen dit discours. Dit kan op websites als www.imdb.com of www.moviemeter.nl, waar de consument zelf recensies kan plaatsen. Wat hier interessant aan is, is het gegeven dat deze

'beoordelingssites' steeds meer gezien worden als de graadmeter voor culturele preferenties, wat de consensus betreffende de rol van de professionele criticus in gevaar brengt (Duan & Whinston, 2008). Tancer (2009) en Vermeulen & Seegers (2009) stellen zelfs dat deze sites belangrijker zijn dan recensies van gerenommeerde recensenten of officiële classificaties, zoals bijvoorbeeld vaststellingen van hoge en/of lage kunstvormen. De probleemstelling die hieruit voortvloeit is gerelateerd aan het gegeven dat user generated reviews (de online recensies) steeds populairder en belangrijker lijken te worden voor de consumenten (en dus tevens voor de filmmaatschappijen). Echter zijn het de gerenommeerde cultuurcritici die verantwoordelijk (dienen te) zijn voor de wijdverspreide ideeën voor wat betreft smaakpatronen, normen en waarden.

1.2 Probleemstelling

Het probleem schuilt in het gegeven dat er wrijving lijkt te zijn tussen de verschillende soorten reviews. De rol van de gerenommeerde recensenten lijkt in het nauw gedreven en websites als imdb.com en moviemeter.nl lijken de boosdoeners. De vraag is of dit echt zo is? Zijn er duidelijke verschillen en/of overeenkomsten aan te wijzen tussen deze reviews en waarin schuilen deze (mogelijke) verschillen en/of overeenkomsten dan? Veranderen de online reviews de criteria voor filmclassificatie en vormen zij een vervanging voor de gerenommeerde kritiek? Of is het juist het kunstkritische discours dat invloed heeft op de online reviews? Om inzicht te krijgen in bovenstaande kwesties is een onderzoeksvraag geformuleerd aan de hand van eerder verricht onderzoek en een specifieke toepasbare 'casestudy'. Het onderzoek, en dus de leidende onderzoeksvraag, is gevormd naar aanleiding van een onderzoek van David & Pinch (2005), waarin de rol van online reviews op www.amazon.com wordt geanalyseerd en bekritiseerd. De komst van web 2.0, plus de applicaties die dit web dragen, resulteert in een interactieve digitale wereld waarin gebruikers elkaar aan kunnen zetten tot conversatie betreffende culturele producten. Dit impliceert dat deze culturele producten online dan ook bekritiseerd kunnen worden (Tancer, 2009).

Om mijn onderzoek af te bakenen zal ik mij uitsluitend richten op een specifiek genre, namelijk: de '*Comic book adaptation*' (CBA). Dit specifieke filmgenre heeft de laatste jaren heel erg aan populariteit gewonnen en valt dan ook onder het label 'mainstream genre' te scharen. Wat CBA precies is en wat de context hieromtrent precies behelst, staat uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 2: De Comic Book Adaptation. Niet alleen behandel ik dit genre omdat het in populariteit gestegen is, maar ook vanwege het gegeven dat 'comics' (stripverhalen) niet langer alleen voor kinderen zijn, maar een serieuze literaire vorm zijn waarnaar nog weinig onderzoek is gedaan. Vanuit bovenstaand gedachtegoed heb ik dan ook een hoofdvraag, deelvragen en hypothesen opgesteld, zoals te vinden in paragraaf 1.3. Deze hoofdvraag en deelvragen dienen als rode draad voor het complete onderzoek en zullen om deze reden

dan ook gebruikt worden als hoofdstukindeling. De verschillende deelvragen helpen mij om 'het grotere' plaatje te zien achter de door mij opgestelde onderzoeksvraag en dienen daarnaast de hypothesen te bevestigen of falsificeren.

1.3 Hoofdvraag, deelvragen en hypothesen

Om een zo goed mogelijke vergelijking te schetsen tussen de verschillende soorten reviews en de manier waarop zij geschreven zijn, zijn zoals eerder vermeld, een aantal vragen en hypothesen opgesteld. Binnen het onderzoek is gestreefd een beantwoording te geven op de volgende onderzoeksvraag, waarin alle belangrijke aspecten verwerkt zitten:

Van welk kritisch filmdiscours maken auteurs van online 'user generated' reviews en offline krantenrecensies van comic book adaptations gebruik, en welke overeenkomsten en/of verschillen zijn er te vinden?

De discoursen waar in de onderzoeksvraag over gesproken wordt betreffen het populaire entertainment ('laag') discours en het professionele kunstzinnige ('hoog') discours. Wat ik hier precies onder versta staat uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 3: theoretisch kader, en de manier waarop dit gemeten wordt staat verder uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 4: Data en methode.

Om tot een antwoord te komen op de door mij opgestelde onderzoeksvraag zal gebruik gemaakt worden van een aantal deelvragen, die later aan bod komen in de verschillende hoofdstukken. Deze verschillende deelvragen zijn:

D1: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de online user generated reviews van de CBA?

D2: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de offline krantenrecensies van de CBA?

D3: Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

D4: Wat zijn de verschillen tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

Aan de hand van de eerder vermelde de probleemstelling, plus de uitwerking van het theoretisch kader in hoofdstuk 3, heb ik ook een aantal hypothesen opgesteld die ik binnen mijn onderzoek zal proberen te valideren. Deze hypothesen betreffen:

H1a: Er is een wezenlijk verschil tussen professionele reviews en user generated reviews.

H1b: Professionele filmcritici handelen met meer contextueel inzicht en objectiviteit.

H1c: User generated reviews zijn veelal opgebouwd vanuit persoonlijke interpretatie.

H2a: De professionele critici maken geen gebruik van het populaire discours.

H2b: De user generated reviews maken wel gebruik van het kunstkritische discours.

Zoals eerder vermeld zullen de deelvragen de basis vormen voor mijn hoofdstukindeling. De verschillende deelvragen hebben allen betrekking op de hoofdvraag en dienen dan ook het doel om het makkelijker en overzichtelijker te maken om een antwoord op de onderzoeksvraag te kunnen formuleren. D1 tot en met D4 hebben dan ook

betrekking op het comparatieve onderzoek zelf. Hiermee worden verbanden gelegd tussen de verschillen onderzochte reviews en kunnen de gegevens van hieruit geanalyseerd worden. De opzet van de deelvragen en natuurlijk ook de hoofdvraag, plus de ontwikkeling van de hypothesen, staat uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 4; Data en methode, paragraaf 4.1.

1.4 Maatschappelijke en wetenschappelijke relevantie

Het gegeven dat verschillende academici zoals Tancer (2009), David & Pinch (2005), Vermeulen & Seegers (2009) en Rankin & Eggimann (2009) onderzoek hebben gedaan naar de 'impact' van user generated reviews op de besluitvorming van consumenten en de uiteindelijke implicaties voor gerenommeerde critici, maakt het überhaupt een actueel en relevant onderwerp. De bevindingen die uit hun onderzoeken voortkomen zijn echter wellicht nog belangrijker. Allen stellen dat online-reviews plaatsverangers beginnen te vormen voor de kunst/cultuurkritiek in gerenommeerde dagbladen. Film is een van de vele verschillende culturele uitingen onderhevig aan kritiek van buitenaf en vormt daarom dan ook direct een gewillige kandidaat voor de vergelijking tussen online en offline reviews. Daarnaast betreft het een populair genre onder de jongere generatie. Dit betreft ook direct de generatie die het meest actief is op web 2.0, voor wat betreft het plaatsen van content en het beoordelen van producten (Tancer, 2009). Uitgaande van bovenstaande informatie kan dan ook verwacht worden dat er veel user generated reviews te vinden zijn betreffende dit genre op websites als imdb.com en dat eventuele ontwikkelingen hierin sterk tot uiting komen.

De keuze voor de CBA als casestudy schuilt meer in de wetenschappelijke relevantie. De ontwikkeling van de CBA (ook uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 2), vormt aanleiding voor specifiek onderzoek naar dit relatief nieuwe genre. De gestegen populariteit in combinatie met de ontwikkeling van niche naar mainstream, plus de relatieve nieuwheid van het genre op zich, maken dit tot een redelijk onontgonnen onderzoeksgebied voor mediawetenschap in het algemeen (Hughes, 2007; Wolk, 2007). Daarbij komt dat de CBA als genre zwaar onderhevig is aan persoonlijke interpretatie en contextuele voorkennis, neigend naar het kunstzinnige (Wolk, 2007). Om deze reden lijkt een vergelijking tussen het populaire discours en het kunstkritisch discours, op het gebied van de geschreven reviews, dan ook zeer relevant. Het genre lijkt dubbelzinnigheid te vertonen voor wat betreft de productionele eigenschappen. De benodigde contextuele kennis en interpretatie verwijzen naar het 'hoge kunstgehalte' van dit genre, terwijl de bron van alle CBA's een populair product betreft waarbij de films zelf ook grotendeels gericht zijn op het mainstream publiek. Dit maakt het een interessant subject voor een studie naar discoursgebruik.

1.5 Opzet thesis

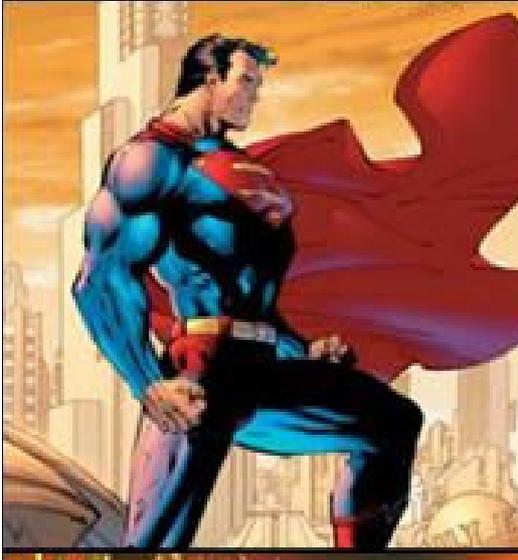
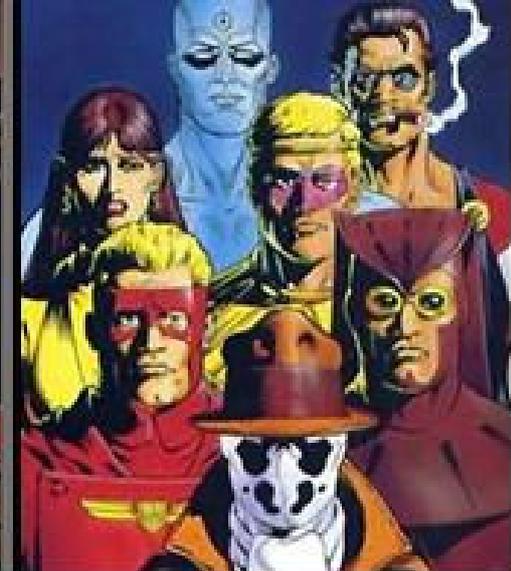
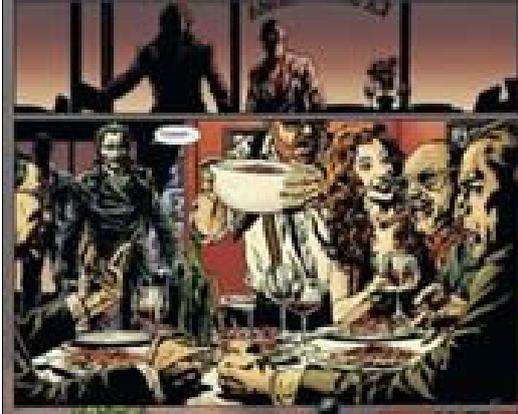
De thesis bestaat in totaal uit een zestal hoofdstukken. Het eerste hoofdstuk, zoals u heeft kunnen lezen, betreft een inleidende en verklarende tekst voor het onderwerp, de casestudy

en de relevantie van het onderzoek. In het tweede hoofdstuk wordt dieper ingegaan op de CBA, de ontwikkeling hiervan en de belangrijke contextuele aspecten die dit genre dragen. Dit hoofdstuk is er op gericht om uitleg te verschaffen over wat de CBA precies is en wat men met deze informatie kan doen in het kader van dit onderzoek.

Het derde hoofdstuk beslaat het theoretisch kader waarin voorgaande onderzoeken, plus de theoretische uitgangspunten die hieruit zijn voortgevloeid, worden besproken. Binnen paragraaf 1.3 is al gesproken over de vergelijking tussen het populaire discours en het kunstkritisch discours. Deze vergelijking wordt in het derde hoofdstuk dan ook verder uitgelegd. Daarnaast worden culturele classificaties besproken en wordt er een duidelijke ontwikkeling geschetst van de opkomst van kunst- en cultuurkritiek in het algemeen, de opkomst van kunstclassificaties in de film, de opkomst van het populaire discours hieromtrent, en de opkomst en gevolgen van web 2.0. Dit gebeurt aan de hand van verschillende specifieke voorbeelden, zoals *user created content* (UCC), de *user generated review* (UGR) en natuurlijk de geselecteerde filmtitels, terug te vinden in bijlage (1).

In het vierde hoofdstuk wordt ingegaan op de geselecteerde data en de methode van analyse. Alle twintig geselecteerde filmtitels (CBA's), worden ingedeeld binnen twee classificaties, te weten: (1) adaptatie van een strip bekend bij het grote publiek en (2) adaptatie van een strip minder bekend bij het grote publiek (zie bijlage: 1). De reden van deze tweedeling en de tweedeling op zich zijn terug te vinden in paragraaf 4.2. Naast deze tweedeling zal de gebruikte methode van analyse nader worden toegelicht. Er is gewerkt aan de hand van een coderingsschema, op basis van de eerder genoemde classificaties en discoursen, waar in paragraaf 4.3 en 4.4 meer over te lezen is.

In hoofdstuk 5 wordt chronologisch antwoord gegeven op de eerder gestelde deelvragen. Iedere paragraaf apart representeert op volgorde D1 tot en met D4. De resultaten die hieruit voortkomen zullen worden omgezet tot een analyse van de hoofdvraag. Deze analyse vindt plaats in het zesde en laatste hoofdstuk. Binnen dit hoofdstuk wordt ook gekeken naar een specifieke terugkoppeling naar de eerder behandelde theoretische uitgangspunten van het onderzoek. Daarnaast wordt op het huidig onderzoek gereflecteerd en zal er advies gegeven worden over mogelijk vervolgonderzoek en mogelijke complicaties. Naar aanleiding van de beantwoording van de onderzoeksvraag zullen de eerder gestelde hypothesen ook worden getoetst, gevalideerd en/of gefalsificeerd.



2. De Comic Book Adaptation

2.1 Inleiding

Comic book adaptations (CBA's) zijn films waaraan stripverhalen (of graphic novels) ten grondslag hebben gelegen. Dit heeft de implicatie dat er gewerkt wordt vanuit een bestaand concept dat voor de regisseur en producent(en) als richtlijn dient te gelden (Hughes, 2007). De laatste jaren heeft dit specifieke filmgenre een enorme populariteitsgroei doorgemaakt met de releases van films als: *Spiderman* (2002), *Iron man* (2008) en *The Dark Knight* (2008). Het is opmerkelijk dat uitgerekend dit genre de laatste jaren een dergelijke groei heeft doorgemaakt, juist omdat het voorheen niet erg populair (mainstream) was. Het genre kende hiervoor slechts sporadische successen zoals; *Superman* (1987) of *Batman* (1989), maar wist als opzichzelfstaand genre nooit echt te slagen, getuigende de verkoopcijfers van dergelijke films.

Een kenmerk van CBA's is dus dat er gewerkt wordt vanuit een bestaand concept dat (redelijk) bekend is bij het grotere publiek. Dit heeft tot gevolg dat deze films veelal vergeleken worden met het originele werk en op basis hiervan soms ook bekritiseerd kunnen worden. Interpretatie van de originele werken geldt namelijk niet alleen voor de regisseur en de producent(en) van de films als cruciale kwestie, maar ook zeer zeker voor het publiek en de critici die de films beoordelen. Een CBA ontvangt vaak veel kritiek over de mate waarin de context van het originele werk doorsijpelt in de verfilming. Vaak bestaan stripverhalen uit successieve series waarin karakters door de jaren heen onderhevig zijn aan verandering. De films proberen de 'geest' van de strips zo goed mogelijk te vertalen naar het witte doek, maar kunnen natuurlijk nooit een complete serie navertellen (Hughes, 2007). Om deze reden worden wordt de achterliggende context vaak gesimplificeerd en de plot gemoderniseerd, om zo aansluiting te kunnen vinden bij het grote publiek.

Maar waar komt de CBA eigenlijk vandaan en welke ontwikkeling heeft het filmgenre doorgemaakt? Om antwoord te geven op bovenstaande vraag zal allereerst ingegaan worden op hoe de CBA in dit onderzoek precies gedefinieerd wordt. Vervolgens wordt ingegaan op de ontwikkeling van CBA als genre, de grootste spelers in het veld en uiteindelijk wordt het belang van contextuele kennis bij de beoordeling van de CBA beargumenteerd.

2.2 Definitie

Binnen deze thesis wordt de term CBA meer dan eens gebruikt. Het is dan ook van belang om naar de betekenis van de term te kijken, om zo beter te kunnen begrijpen wat hier precies onder verstaan wordt. De term *comic book adaptations* verwijst naar alle films gebaseerd op stripboeken of zogenaamde graphic novels. De graphic novel wordt door verschillende theoretici echter bekritiseerd om de reden dat de term te pretentief zou zijn voor het genre dat het is. Graphic novels zouden dan ook niet verschillen van de 'gewone

comic', zoals de stripboekenreeks *The Amazing Spiderman* (Raeburn, 2004). Volgens Daniel Raeburn (2004) is de term graphic novel, niets minder dan een 'naam' om stripboeken een artistieker imago te geven, terwijl de inhoud niet tot nauwelijks zou verschillen van standaard stripboeken, zoals *Garfield*, *The Amazing Spiderman* of *Batman*. Anderen, zoals bijvoorbeeld Douglas Wolk (2007), beschouwen de graphic novel wel degelijk als een apart genre. Dit omdat de graphic novel zou beschikken over een begin, midden en eind; een gegeven dat volledig anders is bij strips als *Garfield* en het Nederlandse voorbeeld *Fokke & Sukke*. Losstaand van de (chronologische) structuur van de graphic novel, betreft de inhoud van de novels vaak ook een duister verhaal (Wolk, 2007). Dit is ook in contrast is met de 'gewone comic' waarin alledaagse situaties veelal worden geridiculiseerd en uitvergroot door middel van cartoonese figuren. Zelf beschouw ik de graphic novel als losstaand genre. Dit omdat hierin vaak wordt ingespeeld op symboliek en maatschappelijke relevantie waardoor deze vorm van 'een verhaal vertellen' een complexe benadering vereist. Hierbij moet niet alleen gekeken worden naar de novel zelf maar ook naar de context waarin de novel wordt gepubliceerd, dit in tegenstelling tot strips als *Fokke & Sukke* waarin (veelal) slechts gerefereerd wordt naar het alledaagse.

Er bestaat dus een theoretische tweedeling over de vraag of graphic novels onderdeel zijn van het genre 'comics', of dat het juist een apart genre dient te zijn. Op het gebied van filmadaptaties (de verfilmingen van films gebaseerd op een comic/ graphic novel) wordt hier echter niet tot nauwelijks onderscheid tussen gemaakt. De film *Garfield* (2004) wordt evengoed als CBA gelabeld als de film *30 days of night* (2007) op websites als imdb.com en rottentomatoes.com. Hoewel het theoretisch onderscheid niet tot nauwelijks wordt gemaakt met betrekking tot verfilmingen, lijkt het mij desalniettemin belangrijk om het vraagstuk in het achterhoofd te houden. Dit om de simpele reden dat het publiek, evenals de gerenommeerde critici, op de hoogte kunnen zijn van dit vraagstuk en hun reviews hier dan ook op aan zullen passen. Ondanks de theoretische tweedeling wordt in dit onderzoek geen onderscheid gemaakt tussen comics en graphic novels, maar zullen alle adaptaties van beide genres gerekend worden als CBA's.

2.3 De ontwikkeling

Het spreekt voor zich dat de CBA zijn oorsprong vindt in de industrie van de strips/comics en graphic novels (de stripboekindustrie). Het is belangrijk om deze oorsprong te schetsen omdat het plotselinge succes van de CBA zowel in deze stripboekindustrie schuilt als in de marketingstrategieën van de filmindustrie waarin de adaptaties ontwikkeld worden (Hughes, 2007).

Vanaf de jaren '40 van de 20^{ste} eeuw werd de stripboekindustrie geregeerd door een tweetal uitgevers, genaamd DC Comics en Marvel Comics. Beide uitgevers zijn verantwoordelijk voor een aantal van de bekendere stripboeken en stripfiguren, zoals

Superman, *Watchmen* en *Batman* van DC Comics en *The Incredible Hulk*, *Spiderman* en *X-men* van Marvel Comics.

In 1969 werd DC Comics overgenomen door Warner Bros. Entertainment, waarbij de aparte 'bedrijfstak voor stripboeken' onder de naam DC Comics bleef bestaan. Deze aparte tak voor stripboeken (en later de verfilmingen hiervan) kan beschreven worden als de eerste stap richting het genre CBA, aangezien het eerste samenwerkingsverband tussen de stripboekindustrie en de filmindustrie werd verwezenlijkt (Hughes, 2007). Naast de productie van verschillende vormen van *merchandise* gebaseerd op de stripboekfiguren, werd er onder Warner dan ook gewerkt aan de ontwikkeling van films gebaseerd op de strips en de figuren die hierin een rol speelden. Het duurde echter nagenoeg twee decennia voordat de eerste echte stripboekverfilming een feit was. De film *Superman* (1987) bleek een (onverwacht) groot succes. Twee jaar later vond deze film dan ook aansluiting in de film *Batman* (1989) om het succes nog maar eens dunnetjes over te doen. Door deze onverwachte successen wist DC Comics een groot marktaandeel op het gebied van stripboeken van de concurrentie weg te snoepen. Dit onder andere omdat de films *Superman* en *Batman*, zorgden voor een doorstart in de verkoop van comics van DC. (Hughes, 2007; Wolk, 2007). Marvel Comics moest, dankzij de successen van DC Comics, uitwijken naar een andere strategie. Deze nieuwe strategie werd ingezet door de nieuwe topman bij Marvel Comics: Ron Perelman (Meyers, 2006). Zijn visie was om Marvel uit te bouwen tot een internationaal mediaconglomeraat, door in te spelen op veel verschillende marktsegmenten. Dit moest volgens hem om zo een breder (en dus groter) publiek aan te spreken en hun marktpositie ten opzichte van de directe concurrent, DC Comics, te verstevigen. Door de samenwerking tussen DC Comics en Warner Bros. Entertainment en de vernieuwde marktstrategie van Marvel Comics, bloeide de stripboekindustrie dan ook op (Meyers, 2006).

De marktstrategie van Ron Perelman had duidelijke positieve effecten. Het aanboren van nieuwe markten door het creëren van veel verschillende karakters in veel verschillende strips, had in de eerste periode effect op de verkoopcijfers en het algemeen marktaandeel van de uitgever (Meyers, 2006). Daarnaast begon Marvel te investeren in honkbalplaatjes (baseballcards) en andere soortgelijke *merchandise*. Op deze manier kon Marvel de artistieke rechten binnen eigen beheer houden en konden karakters en strips maximaal worden geëxploiteerd. Dit leverde een maximaal rendement op financieel gebied op en zorgde voor een maximum aan 'exposure'. Hiermee bedoel ik dat de personages van Marvel Comics via verschillende 'routes' en strategieën bij een breed publiek terecht kwamen (Hughes, 2007; Wolk, 2007).

Halverwege de jaren '90 begon de strategie van Ron Perelman echter scheuren te vertonen en vond er een enorme terugslag plaats. De markt raakte verzadigd; een gegeven dat niet heel vreemd was gezien de segmentatiestrategie van Perelman. Er waren teveel

verschillende karakters in teveel verschillende strips op de markt gebracht om het geheel voor de consument overzichtelijk te houden (Lott, 2002: 68). De fans begonnen de strips te boycotten en het marktaandeel liep gestaag terug. Een faillissement kon niet uitblijven en kwam uiteindelijk dan ook in 1996. In 1998 werd het bijna verwoeste Marvel Comics overgenomen door Toy Biz, een speelgoedfabrikant die voorheen handelde in actiefiguren (action figures) gebaseerd op de figuren uit de stripboeken van Marvel. Marvel Comics kreeg hiermee de kans wederom een nieuwe weg in te slaan. Ditmaal was het aan Bill Jemas om een nieuwe strategie op te zetten om de oude fans terug te winnen en om nieuwe fans te creëren. Hij maakte een begin met het beleid dat wij hedendaags ook nog van Marvel Comics kennen; hierbij ligt de focus op de centrale karakters. In plaats van het ontwikkelen van heel veel verschillende nieuwe karakters en strips, ging Marvel zich bezig houden met het exploiteren van de meest populaire karakters. De manier waarop dit volgens Jemas moest gebeuren was door gebruik te maken van andere media. Deze strategie heeft er uiteindelijk toe geleid dat de stripboekhelden de grote stap naar videogames, televisieprogramma's en natuurlijk de bioscoop konden maken, waar zij door de (herwonnen) fans met open armen werden ontvangen. Synergie met een directe focus op karakterontwikkeling en de exploitatie hiervan heeft voor zowel DC Comics, als Marvel Comics, de doorslag gegeven om hun striphelden naar de bioscopen te brengen in de vorm van CBA's.

2.4 Opmars

Nu duidelijk is op welke manier de voornaamste spelers uit de stripboekindustrie de overgang van stripboeken naar films hebben kunnen maken, dient vervolgens gekeken te worden naar de stijgende populariteit van deze films. Van de meest verkochte strip, *The Amazing Spiderman* #583, zijn 'slechts' 352.953 exemplaren verkocht. Met een gemiddelde prijs per stripboek van 3,99 dollar, brengt dat de totale omzet op 1.408.282 dollar. Dit staat in sterk contrast tot de opbrengsten van de gelijknamige filmreeks, waarvan de eerste film alleen al goed bleek voor 821.708.551 dollar (BoxOfficeMojo.com, 2010). Het is dan ook direct duidelijk dat de voornaamste bron van inkomsten voor uitgevers als Marvel en DC niet meer bestaat uit de stripboeken zelf, maar uit de films die hierop gebaseerd zijn.

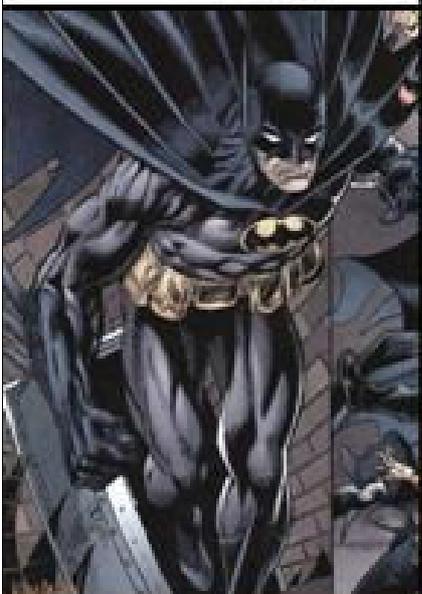
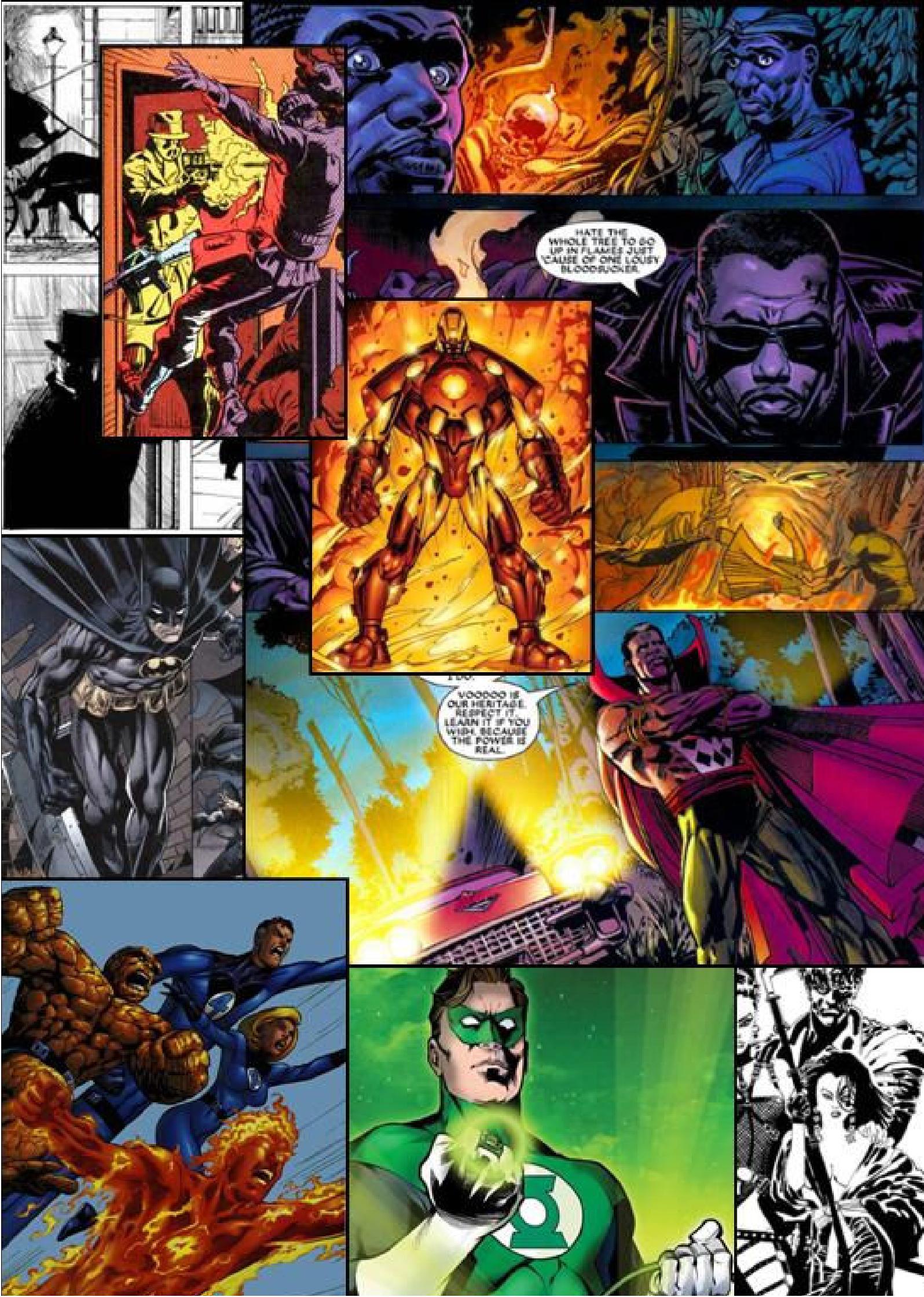
De strategieën die eerder waren ontwikkeld om nieuw publiek aan te spreken, hebben vooral betrekking op jongeren. De strips worden aangepast om de verhaallijnen en personages toegankelijker te maken voor deze 'target group'. Alle merchandise producten, en dus ook de films, dienen hier ook op in te springen. Hiermee bedoel ik dat bijvoorbeeld de films ook toegankelijk gemaakt worden voor het publiek dat de productie wil bereiken. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is de adaptatie van de strip *Spiderman* (2002). In de originele stripboekenreeks is het hoofdpersonage Peter Parker een gescheiden depressieve leraar, terwijl de strips van de nieuwe garde en de films gingen over Peter Parker als schoolgaande tiener. De nieuwe strategieën, gericht op een breder publiek, en de herstructurering van de

stripboekindustrie op zich, wierpen al met al hun vruchten af (Wyman, 2008). Niet alleen ging de stripboekverkoop omhoog, alle koopwaar met betrekking tot striphelden werd massaal verkocht aan het (nieuwe) publiek. Deze toegenomen interesse heeft de uiteindelijke doorbraak voor de CBA als mainstream filmgenre teweeggebracht. Langzaam maar zeker werden verschillende filmmaatschappijen meer bereid geld te investeren in stripboekverfilmingen. Één van de hoogtepunten is het bedrag van maar liefst 200 miljoen dollar dat 20th Century Fox in de verfilming van de *X-men* reeks pompte. Vanaf dat moment heeft het filmgenre een enorme groei doorgemaakt (Wyman, 2008). De hype rondom deze films heeft zich vanaf de eerste CBA in 1987 dan ook wereldwijd ontwikkeld en lijkt vooralsnog niet afgelopen. De miljoenen dollars aan investeringen in verschillende stripboekverfilmingen en successen in de bioscopen zelf getuigen hiervan. Daarbij komt dat met de komst van films als *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Sin City 2* (2011) en *The First Avenger: Captain America* (2011) het genre vooralsnog niet uitgebloeid lijkt te zijn.

2.5 Kennis en Interpretatie

Kennis en interpretatie zijn aspecten die refereren naar de productionele context van een bepaald product. Binnen dit onderzoek is het belangrijk hier aandacht aan te besteden. Dit aangezien deze aspecten belangrijk zijn bij het vormen van een specifiek waardeoordeel. Wanneer iemand over veel kennis beschikt, met betrekking tot een bepaald product, kan men ook diepere inzichten verschaffen middels zijn/haar interpretatie van hetzelfde product. Binnen dit onderzoek slaan deze aspecten dan ook terug op de CBA. De Comic book adaptation is namelijk een filmgenre dat onderhevig is aan interpretatie vanuit verschillende personen en/of instituten. Hierbij kan gedacht worden aan de oorspronkelijke schrijver van de comic/ graphic novel, de producent van de film(s), de regisseur en de kijker, maar ook aan gerenommeerde critici. (Hughes, 2007). Hoe een bepaald filmpubliek een film interpreteert is onder andere afhankelijk van persoonlijke preferenties of de mate waarin er herkenning optreedt in het handelingsvermogen van de karakters in de film (Hughes, 2007; Bordwell & Thompson, 2003). Echter, persoonlijke preferentie is niet het enige referentiekader voor interpretatie. Vooral in het geval van de CBA is contextuele kennis van groot belang. Contextuele kennis houdt in: kennis met betrekking tot de achtergrond van de karakters, kennis van de achterliggende gedachten, kennis van de context van de comics zelf, kennis van alle originele werken, en kennis van het symbolisch gedachtegoed binnen de comics (Wolk, 2007). Deze vorm van kennis wordt vooral aangemeten door specifieke groepen binnen het filmpubliek. Zo'n groep wordt veelal beschreven als een *fanbase*. Deze fanbases weten vaak veel meer over de originele strips en de context hiervan dan de gemiddelde persoon. Om deze reden kunnen de recensies die zij schrijven en het commentaar dat zij leveren erg relevant en interessant zijn. Wellicht zijn zij de 'echte' critici voor dit genre in plaats van de gerenommeerde critici in kwaliteitskranten. Comics spelen in op de behoeften

van het grote publiek door toegankelijke verhalen te vertellen. De symbolische waarden worden echter beter verborgen en zullen alleen voor de fans bekend en van belang zijn (Wolk, 2007; Hughes, 2007). De reviews die zij schrijven zullen deze kennis dan ook weerspiegelen. Hoewel zij ook diegenen zijn die de films lastig los kunnen zien van het werk waarop de films gebaseerd zijn, bieden de reviews van fans wel een dieper inzicht in de werken.



3. Theoretisch kader

Binnen de voorgaande hoofdstukken heb ik mij vooral bezig gehouden met de uiteenzetting van het gestelde probleem en de specifieke casestudy waarop ik de probleemstelling wil toepassen. Binnen dit derde hoofdstuk zal ik mij meer richten op theoretische concepten omtrent deze probleemstelling en de casestudy. Zo probeer ik op overzichtelijke wijze inzicht te verschaffen in het ontstaan van culturele classificaties, de rol van kritiek in de kunst- en entertainmentwereld, filmkritiek, de opkomst van *user-generated content* en de online filmrecensies die hieruit voortvloeien.

3.1 Hoge versus lage kunst – culturele classificatie

Volgens Bourdieu (1984) is een veld van culturele productie een plaats waarbinnen continue verschuivingen van machtsposities van de producenten van culturele goederen plaatsvinden. In dit totale veld van culturele productie bevindt zich nog een ander veld, namelijk 'the field of restricted production', oftewel het domein van de hoge kunst (Bourdieu, 1984). Dit veld staat eigenlijk lijnrecht tegenover het omringende veld waarbinnen dit 'restricted field' zich bevindt. Hierbinnen worden producten gemaakt die bedoeld zijn voor 'peers' (gelijkgestemde producenten) en experts (Kersten & Janssen, 2010). Het 'restricted field of production' wordt omschreven als (relatief) autonome kunstwereld binnen het totale veld van culturele productie. Hiermee bedoel ik dat het zich los waant van economische restricties en eigen beoordelingscriteria hanteert. Deze criteria worden dan ook gebruikt en gevormd door de 'peers' (gelijkwaardigen) en experts, in tegenstelling tot de criteria in het veld van de grootschalige cultuurproductie, waarin de consument als belangrijkste beoordelaar wordt gezien. Het veld van grootschalige cultuurproductie produceert dan ook goederen voor het algemene, 'gemiddelde' publiek en kent als meest prominente doel het maximaliseren van economisch gewin. In het 'restricted field', oftewel de kunstwereld, staat artistieke waarde boven het behalen van economisch gewin. Er heerst hier een 'ontkenning van economische principes' en een hang naar prestige. Een cultureel veld, bijvoorbeeld het filmveld, kent een zogeheten classificatiesysteem om te bepalen wat wel en niet tot filmkunst behoort, wat wel of geen artistieke waarde bezit, en dus welke films en filmmakers in welk deel van het totale filmveld horen.

De kunstkritiek neemt van oudsher een belangrijke positie in bij de totstandkoming van zo'n classificatie van culturele producten; zij groeperen cultuurproducten op basis van overeenkomsten, verschillen en de kwaliteit van de producten zelf (Van Rees, Vermunt & Verboord, 1999; Van Rees, Janssen & Verboord, 2006). Deze classificaties ontstaan door de behoefte een duidelijk overzicht te scheppen tussen en binnen verschillende kunstsectoren; de kritiek verschaft duidelijke afbakening door cultuurproducten in te delen op basis van classificaties als 'hoge' of 'lage' kunst. Het onderscheid tussen hoge en lage kunst is niet alleen van belang binnen de kunstensector zelf, maar dient ook als informatie verschaffend

mechanisme voor bijvoorbeeld overheden en het publiek. Het onderscheid tussen bijvoorbeeld art film en mainstream film is geen statisch gegeven; het is een onderscheid dat in een continue staat van ontwikkeling is. Dit houdt in dat de grenzen tussen 'hoog' en 'laag' dynamisch zijn en altijd verbonden kunnen worden aan verschillende maatschappelijke klassen en graden (Verdaasdonk, 2003; Wolfson, 2003). Het praktisch nut van deze verschillende classificaties is dat er een overzichtelijke indeling in maatschappelijke preferenties zichtbaar wordt. DiMaggio (1987), bijvoorbeeld, legt deze vorm van classificatie uit aan de hand van wat hij noemt: 'administratieve classificaties'. Hiermee bedoelt hij dat een overzichtelijk geheel van de kunstsector(en) geschept wordt. Op deze manier wordt het voor bijvoorbeeld de overheid, en tevens het publiek, makkelijker om keuzes te maken wat betreft de subsidiëring van verschillende culturele/kunstzinnige producten en instanties (Verdaasdonk, 2003).

Volgens Bourdieu (1984) zijn de classificaties van culturele producten afhankelijk van de verschillende soorten kapitaal waar de beoordelaars al dan niet over beschikken, te weten economisch kapitaal, cultureel kapitaal, en symbolisch kapitaal. Deze vormen van kapitaal zijn verdeeld binnen een bepaald veld van culturele productie (*field of cultural production*) en hebben allen invloed op elkaar. Kapitaal kan worden toebedeeld aan bepaalde personen of instanties, die een waarde hebben binnen dit specifieke veld. Zo bestaat het economisch kapitaal bijvoorbeeld uit de koopkracht en marktpositie van een persoon of instantie. Het cultureel kapitaal daarentegen, bestaat uit de kennis, vaardigheden en scholing van een persoon of instantie (Bourdieu, 1984). Instanties met veel economisch kapitaal zijn logischerwijs in staat om een cultuurproduct of producent met economisch kapitaal te belonen, maar door de ontkenning van economische principes in het kunstzinnige gedeelte van het veld, neemt de artistieke waarde daar niet door toe (eerder af). Waardering van een cultuurproduct door personen of instanties met veel cultureel kapitaal leidt niet tot economisch gewin maar heeft wel een toename van symbolisch kapitaal (oftewel prestige) van het product en de producent tot gevolg.

Volgens Bourdieu (1984) valt de beoordeling van kunst op artistieke waarde alleen toe te kennen aan 'de hogere bevolgingsklassen'. Hiermee doelt hij op diegenen met een gedegen opleiding en contextuele kennis betreffende de beoordeelde producten (cultureel kapitaal). Hierdoor komt men uit bij de 'peers' en experts, de mensen met de meeste kennis en vaardigheid om bijvoorbeeld films op waarde te schatten. Het 'gewone' publiek in het grootschalige deel van het filmveld heeft niet voldoende kennis van zaken om dit soort classificaties te kunnen maken, en is alleen in staat om economisch kapitaal aan te wenden en uit te delen. Zij dienen geleid te worden in hun goede smaak. Er heerst dus een duidelijke strijd tussen het economisch kapitaal en het cultureel- en symbolisch kapitaal. Hierbij is het economisch kapitaal de belangrijkste drijfkracht voor de grootschalige cultuurproductie, wat afbraak doet aan de autonomie van kunst, en zijn cultureel- en symbolisch kapitaal de

belangrijkste drijfveren voor het 'restricted field'

Hieronder in figuur (1) staat bovenstaande wellicht duidelijker weergegeven. Aan de linkerkant staat duidelijk een verdeling in de eerder genoemde soorten kapitaal en rechts is weergegeven waar deze kapitalen onder vallen. Er bestaat dus één groot veld van culturele productie, waarbinnen (simplistisch gezien) twee velden vallen te verdelen: het veld van de grootschalige cultuurproductie (massaproductie) en het 'restricted field' (de kunstwereld).

Kapitalen

Cultureel :

- * Kennis
- * Vaardigheden
- * Scholing

Symbolisch :

- * Waardering
- * Prestige
- * Beoordeling experts

Economisch :

- * Koopkracht
- * Marktpositie
- * Economische status

Veld van culturele productie

Grootschalige productie

- * Economisch kapitaal
- * Consument als beoordelaar
- * Doelstelling: economisch gewin
- * Afbraak aan symbolisch en cultureel kapitaal

Restricted field

- * Cultureel kapitaal
- * Symbolisch kapitaal
- * Experts als beoordelaars
- * Doelstelling: artistieke waarde
- * Ontkenning economisch kapitaal

Figuur (1): Versimpelde weergave veldtheorie

De manier waarop in deze verschillende velden beoordelingen tot stand komen verschilt per veld. Zo spreekt DiMaggio (1987) bijvoorbeeld van professionele classificaties die erop gericht zijn om een zo objectief mogelijk beginsel vast te stellen. Hiermee doelt hij erop dat deze classificaties erop gericht zijn om duidelijkheid te scheppen binnen het besproken veld zelf. Zo kan er bijvoorbeeld een bepaald vakjargon worden vastgesteld, of kunnen richtlijnen voor kunstenaars worden opgesteld waaraan moet worden voldaan (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Becker, 1982). Deze professionele classificaties zouden dus alleen tot stand kunnen komen aan de hand van voldoende cultureel kapitaal (contextuele kennis en een gedegen opleiding betreffende het onderwerp) (Bourdieu, 1984). Zo'n professionele classificatie kan dus alleen gebruikt worden in het 'restricted field', waar het gehanteerd wordt door gelijkwaardige producenten (peers) en experts. Deze classificatie betreft direct ook de

scheiding tussen amateur en professioneel binnen de verschillende bevolkingsgroepen, voor wat betreft de kunst- en cultuurkritiek, plus de scheiding tussen professioneel en amateur voor wat betreft de twee verschillende velden (grootschalige cultuurproductie wordt beoordeeld door amateurs, "restricted field" wordt beoordeeld door professionals) (Keen, 2007).

Nu duidelijk is hoe een cultureel veld van productie eruitziet en welke krachten er een rol in spelen, is het belangrijk om te weten wat één van de belangrijkste classificaties is en wat deze behelst. Ik heb het hier over de indeling van 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst, waarbij 'hoge kunst' wordt ingedeeld in het 'restricted field' en 'lage kunst' wordt ingedeeld in de grootschalige cultuurproductie. Wat is eigenlijk het specifieke verschil tussen 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst? Het praktisch nut van de classificaties schuilt in verschillende maatschappelijke belangen, maar de classificatie zelf is minder duidelijk (Wolfson, 2003; Verdaasdonk, 2003). De klassieke scheidingslijn tussen hoge en lage kunst is de complexiteit en de maatschappelijke functie van 'het product'. Wanneer een kunstwerk een complexe benadering vereist, of wanneer het alleen vanuit een objectieve esthetische benadering gewaardeerd kan worden, betreft het een vorm van hoge kunst. Het verschil met lage, ook wel populaire kunst, is dat iedereen deze 'makkelijke' vorm zou kunnen 'begrijpen'. Om 'hoge' kunst te kunnen waarderen zou men kennis moeten hebben van het kunstwerk zelf, de contextuele eigenschappen en de stroming waarbinnen het product zich begeeft (Wolfson, 2003). Dit alles in tegenstelling tot lagere kunstvormen waar het slechts zou draaien om persoonlijke preferentie. Een goed voorbeeld van de duiding tussen 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst is het onderscheid tussen opera als hoge kunstvorm en operette als lage kunstvorm (Verdaasdonk, 2003). Opera krijgt hierdoor direct een statiger karakter wat ook direct complexer lijkt voor het publiek. Het komt direct in aanmerking voor overheids subsidie, maar is tegelijkertijd 'te lastig' voor het grote publiek. Het is dan ook één van de bekendere legitimering paradoxen omtrent subsidies, waar de overheid mee te kampen heeft. Maar is deze paradox terecht? Want verschillen opera en operette daadwerkelijk zoveel van elkaar dat ze binnen verschillende discoursen beschreven dienen te worden? Dit is het punt waar de rol van de kunstkritiek naar voren treedt. De rol van classificaties en het ontstaan hiervan zijn inmiddels duidelijk en de vage grens tussen 'hoge' en 'lage' kunst is ook geschetst. In de volgende paragraaf wordt de rol van kunstkritiek zelf belicht.

3.2 De Rol van de kritiek in de kunstwereld.

Critici vervullen binnen de kunstwereld een belangrijke 'gatekeeperfunctie'. Dit houdt in dat zij de kwaliteit en complexiteit van 'echte' kunst waarborgen. Vanuit de zogeheten 'esthetische dispositie' kunnen zij kunst beoordelen op artistieke waarde en kwaliteit (Bourdieu, 1989). Dit houdt in dat het kunstwerk wordt benaderd 'vanaf een afstand' en dat interpretatie, context, complexiteit, innovatie, originaliteit en dergelijke, meegenomen worden in de beoordeling van dit kunstwerk. Bourdieu (1989) verklaart dit als volgt.

Professionele critici ontwikkelen een bepaalde (geschoolde) habitus ten opzichte van de kunstwereld waarin men zich begeeft. Deze 'blik op de wereld' dient als leidraad voor de consument, om het verschil tussen kunst en populaire cultuur te kunnen duiden. Tussen de gerenommeerde recensenten van kranten en hun lezers bestaat dus een bepaalde rangorde. De recensenten schrijven stukken over bepaalde kunstwerken, bestemd voor het publiek van de geselecteerde krant. De lezers dienen zich hierdoor op hun beurt aangesproken te voelen. Vanaf de andere kant gezien voegen de lezers zich naar een bepaalde krant en dus naar een bepaalde recensent. Alleen wanneer een recensent op de juiste plek zit (qua geloofsovertuiging of andere preferenties) wordt zijn mening dan ook als juist beschouwd. Dit aangezien de smaak en 'habitus' van de recensent overeenkomen met de overtuiging van de door hem/haar geselecteerde krant. Ondanks de verspreiding over verschillende kranten, is het voor de critici belangrijk om eensgezind te zijn betreffende de culturele classificaties (Janssen, 1994). Ze zijn er namelijk voor het volk, om duiding te geven aan kwaliteit en smaak. De classificaties, zoals besproken in paragraaf 3.1, worden uiteindelijk deels gevormd door de critici zelf. De beoordeling van een film met een aantal sterren bijvoorbeeld betreft een administratieve classificatie. Op deze manier wordt het voor het volk direct duidelijk welke films zij goed zouden moeten vinden en welke niet.

Naast administratieve classificatie speelt ook professionele classificatie een belangrijke rol binnen de kunstwereld zelf (DiMaggio, 1987). Professionele classificatie betreft de kritiek vanuit de kunstsector op de kunstsector. De ontwikkeling van vakjargon en de beoordeling door 'gelijkwaardigen' is van groot belang om een zo objectief mogelijk beginsel van kunst te krijgen. Op deze manier valt de beoordeling van kunst en cultuur dan ook in te delen in twee verschillende discoursen. Namelijk het door mij benoemde kunstkritisch discours en het zogenaamde populaire discours. Het eerste discours betreft de manier van beoordeling zoals dat verwacht wordt van professionele critici. Het gebruik van vakjargon, contextuele kennis en interpretatie spelen hierin bijvoorbeeld een belangrijke rol. Het populaire discours daarentegen gaat uit van de beoordeling van de consument. Hier zou het puur draaien om termen als 'gevoel' en 'participatie', dit discours is tekenend voor een cultureel genre dat als puur entertainment wordt gezien. Binnen dit onderzoek spelen deze twee discoursen een zeer belangrijke rol. Om de door mij gebruikte discoursen echter beter te kunnen begrijpen zal eerst gekeken moeten worden naar de ontwikkeling van film als kunststroom. Dit omdat de gebruikte discoursen meer van toepassing zijn op 'de film', dan op de gehele kunstensector. Om deze reden zal in paragraaf 3.3 dan ook eerst deze ontwikkeling geschetst worden, waarbij de twee discoursen geplaatst zullen worden binnen de veldtheorie van Bourdieu, waarna in de vierde en vijfde paragraaf aandacht besteed wordt aan de uitleg betreffende de twee verschillende discoursen zelf.

3.3 Classificatie van film – film als kunst

De grenzen tussen hoge en lage kunst zijn moeilijk te duiden en lijken dan ook dynamisch te zijn. Een duidelijke consensus over smaak en kwaliteit kan ook niet direct worden opgesteld en de meningen van de critici dienen dan ook meer als richtlijn dan als wapenfeit. Juist omdat de grenzen moeilijk te trekken zijn, hebben verschillende culturele genres, zoals de Amerikaanse Hollywoodfilm, aan prestige weten te winnen. Baumann (2001) beschrijft deze opmars vanaf de jaren zestig aan de hand van drie samenhangende ontwikkelingen, te weten: (1) de maatschappelijke veranderingen buiten de filmwereld, (2) de veranderingen binnen de filmwereld en (3) de opkomst van het intellectuele filmdiscours (door mij ook wel beschreven als het kunstkritisch discours).

De veranderingen buiten de filmwereld, die van invloed zijn geweest op de ontwikkeling van film als kunst, lagen voornamelijk binnen eenzelfde context. Baumann (2001) beschrijft deze verandering voornamelijk als 'changing opportunity space'. Hiermee wordt bedoeld dat de ruimte voor de beschouwing voor film als kunstobject, is verbreed door onder andere de opkomst van andere mediavormen en concurrenten. Het meest duidelijke voorbeeld hiervan is de televisie als substituut voor film. Het grootste deel van de samenleving verkoos, tussen de jaren vijftig en zestig van de vorige eeuw, het nieuwe medium televisie boven film. De economische stuwkracht achter de filmindustrie werd dan ook geremd en verplaatst naar dit nieuwe medium. Deze daling van de economische stuwkracht heeft er echter wel voor gezorgd dat artistieke niche-markten ontstonden waarin meer waarde werd gehecht aan symboliek dan aan maximalisering van de omzet. Film werd een product voor specifieke groepen in de samenleving en verkreeg binnen deze groepen dan ook meer aanzien (Baumann, 2001). Vooral de hogere klassen bleven film bekijken, terwijl de lagere klassen thuis bleven om televisie te kijken. Baumann (2001) concludeert daarbij dat een stijging in de sociale rangorde van film, de status van film zelf verhoogt. Dit bespreekt Baumann (2001) in navolging van Bourdieu, waarmee hij wil zeggen dat het aanzien van film als product stijgt, wanneer de sociale klassen die het product bekijken ook stijgen. Ook hier is dus een duidelijke worsteling tussen het economisch kapitaal en symbolisch kapitaal te zien. De afname van economische belangen (economisch kapitaal) heeft ervoor kunnen zorgen dat gespecialiseerde niche-markten ontstonden (cultureel kapitaal), waarin symbolische waarden belangrijker werden geacht dan het economisch gewin (symbolisch kapitaal). Naast de concurrentiepositie van televisie vond er ook een uitbreiding van het complete scholingssysteem plaats. Door deze verandering werd het voor het publiek mogelijk om film op een andere manier te benaderen en om film als serieus (kunst)product te kunnen leren begrijpen (Baumann, 2007: 34). Volgens Baumann (2001), in navolging van Bourdieu (1987, 1989), hebben deze contextuele aspecten ertoe geleid dat film steeds meer prestige kreeg en als kunststroming gezien ging worden.

Naast de 'changing opportunity space' noemt Baumann (2001) de 'institutionalization

of resources and practices'. Het gaat hier om een verandering binnen de filmwereld zelf. Waar het hier om draait is de verandering van het proces van productie en consumptie binnen deze kunstwereld (Baumann, 2001; Becker, 1982; Alexander, 2003). Er zijn dan ook een drietal ontwikkelingen die hebben bijgedragen aan de totstandkoming van film als kunstvorm, die allen gekoppeld kunnen worden aan de ontwikkeling van processen als distributie en productie, namelijk: (1) de opkomst van filmfestivals, (2) de opkomst van universitaire film en media opleidingen en (3) de transformatie van het studiosysteem.

De opkomst van filmfestivals heeft ervoor gezorgd dat er onderlinge 'strijd' tussen films kon ontstaan en dat er 'expertise' nodig was om uit te wijzen welke film het best was en op welk gebied. Daarbij komt dat de films op een andere manier onder de aandacht van het volk werden gebracht. Hierbij was het van belang dat, door middel van de vakjury, een serieuze toon aan het product werd gegeven, waardoor film als cultureel product in aanzien heeft kunnen stijgen.

De ontwikkeling van film als erkend studieobject is een aspect dat zich zowel buiten als binnen de filmwereld heeft afgespeeld. Het tot stand komen van de studies zelf is een aspect wat er buiten valt. Het gedachtegoed dat universiteiten echter steun geven aan film als studieobject, maakt het idee van film als kunstvorm geloofwaardiger en meer legitiem (Baumann, 2001). Universiteiten zijn immers instituten met culturele- en kennis autoriteit. Daarnaast werd film nu binnen een andere context getoond en bestudeerd, waardoor het als cultureel product serieuzer genomen kon gaan worden.

De transformatie van het studiosysteem is het derde en laatste aspect dat Baumann (2001) aandragt als ontwikkeling binnen de filmwereld zelf. De aloude 'production code' werd niet langer gezien als de enige succesvolle formule voor het maken van films. Deze production code was gestoeld op de ontwikkeling van films aan de hand van een vaste serie handelingen en taken. Zo werden regisseurs slechts ingezet om een scenario te verfilmen, zonder daar enige inspraak in te hebben. De regisseur was dus slechts een 'hulpstuk' om een film precies zo te maken zoals het in het scenario stond beschreven. Later vond er echter een belangrijke verschuiving plaats. Deze verschuiving verplaatste de aandacht richting de regisseur als uitvoerend kunstenaar. De opkomst van de auteur theorie van Truffaut (1954), waarin de rol van de regisseur centraal werd gesteld, was hierbij van groot belang. Het artikel van Truffaut (1954) geplaatst in *Cahiers de Cinema* was van een dergelijke invloed dat de autonomie van de regisseur als uitvoerend kunstenaars steeds hoger in het vaandel gedragen begon te worden. De eerder genoemde filmstudies, welke voornamelijk later werden gevormd dan de auteur theorie, benoemde dit dan ook als één van de basisprincipes van het te bestuderen object (Baumann, 2001). De aloude 'production code' waaraan regisseurs zich in klassiek Hollywood dienden te houden werd minder van belang en de symbolische waarden van de geproduceerde producten werd steeds meer opgezocht (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003; Trumbour, 2002). Aan dit alles moest dan ook gehoor gegeven

worden, wat dan ook gebeurde in de vorm van een transformatie in het complete studiosysteem. Regisseurs kregen meer artistieke vrijheid en de producten die zij leverden konden vanaf nu dan ook beschouwd worden als kunst. Natuurlijk worden er degelijke afspraken gemaakt tussen producent en regisseur voor wat betreft artistieke vrijheid. Zelfs hedentendaags gebeurt dit nog altijd. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is de regisseur Terry Gilliam, die artistieke vrijheid krijgt vanuit de kant van de producenten wanneer hij daar een economisch succes tegenover zet (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003). Een specifiek voorbeeld hiervan zijn de films *Tideland* (2005) (artistieke film) en de als 'cash cow' bedoelde film *The Brothers Grimm* (2005) van Gilliam. Aan de hand van dergelijke afspraken en veranderingen ontstond een ander beeld van Hollywood films (en tevens de wereldwijde cinema) op zich. Er ontstond in feite een tweesplitsing tussen kunstzinnige- en 'production code' films. Deze tweesplitsing is dan ook terug te vinden in het filmveld zelf. Er ontstond een kunstwereld binnen het complete filmveld, het 'restricted field', zoals hieronder in figuur (2) te zien is.

Kapitalen

Cultureel :

- * Kennis
- * Vaardigheden
- * Scholing

Symbolisch :

- * Waardering
- * Prestige
- * Beoordeling experts

Economisch :

- * Koopkracht
- * Marktpositie
- * Economische status

Veld van culturele productie

Grootschalige productie

- * Economisch kapitaal
- * Consument als beoordelaar
- * Doelstelling: economisch gewin
- * Afbraak aan symbolisch en cultureel kapitaal
- * Production code films
- * Hollywood
- * Populair discours

Restricted field

- * Cultureel kapitaal
- * Symbolisch kapitaal
- * Experts als beoordelaars
- * Doelstelling: artistieke waarde
- * Ontkenning economisch kapitaal
- * Artistieke film
- * Auteur theorie
- * Kunstkritisch discours

Figuur (2): Versimpelde weergave veldtheorie

In het onderzoek van Baumann (2001), waarin gekeken wordt naar de emancipatie van het complete culturele veld, wordt geconstateerd dat zich veranderingen hebben voorgedaan in het taalgebruik en het gebruik van technieken van de critici tussen 1925 en 1985. Vanaf de jaren zestig wordt allereerst meer gebruik gemaakt van zogenaamde 'high-

art termen' die refereren naar film als kunst. Daarnaast onderscheidt hij acht kritische concepten die almaar meer gebruikt gingen worden binnen de geschreven recensies. Deze concepten zijn: positief en negatief commentaar; het benoemen van de regisseur; een vergelijking tussen regisseurs; een vergelijking met andere films; interpretatie; 'merit in failure' het positieve in het negatieve zien en andersom; kunst tegenover entertainment en een afwijzing van het 'simpele' (Baumann, 2001, 2007). Volgens Baumann zijn de critici, in de periode tussen 1965 en 1970, veel meer gebruik gaan maken van dergelijke termen en concepten om hun recensies beter te onderbouwen. Daarnaast wordt de omvang van de recensies steeds groter, wat betekent dat het aandachtvlak binnen de gerenommeerde kranten, voor wat betreft films en de recensies hiervan, toenam. Deze veranderingen dragen dan ook bij aan de bewering dat film als kunstobject moet worden gezien en bestudeerd. De opkomst van dit 'intellectuele discours van de kunstzinnige (vrije) films', geldt volgens Baumann (2001) dan ook als de derde ontwikkeling die heeft geleid tot de institutionalisering van film als kunst.

De manier waarop de twee verschillende soorten films (production code films en artistieke films) echter werden beoordeeld leek wezenlijk te verschillen. De 'production code films' waren gebaseerd op makkelijk vermaak voor 'het gewone volk'. De kunstzinnige films zijn daarentegen gericht op complexiteit, intellect en esthetische waarden. De discourses omtrent de beoordelingen van deze films werden hier dan ook op aangepast. De manier waarop kunst wordt beoordeeld verloopt binnen verschillende discourses, die per kunststroom kunnen verschillen. De legitimering van film als kunst verloopt dan ook langs genre specifieke conventies waarmee een film getest kan worden op kwaliteit en esthetische waarden. Alleen via een dergelijke weg kan film als kunstobject beoordeeld en bestudeerd worden (Bauman, 2001, 2007). Binnen dergelijke discourses wordt gebruik gemaakt van een specifiek soort taalgebruik (vakjargon). Deze beoordelingen hangen echter grotendeels af van het publiek dat de films bezoekt. De Production code films zijn bestemd voor het 'gewone volk', daar waar de artistieke film is bedoeld voor het geschoolde publiek. De manier waarop de discourses van beoordelingen binnen deze twee verschillende bevolkingsgroepen zijn ontwikkeld verschillen dan ook wezenlijk. Op deze manier ontstonden logischerwijs dan ook twee verschillende discourses om culturele producten te beoordelen, te weten: het intellectueel discours (het kunstkritisch discours) en het populaire discours (Baumann, 2001).

3.4 Intellectuele kunst - Het kunstkritisch discours.

Verschiedene culturele producten hebben in de loop der tijd meer aanzien gekregen en zijn opnieuw geclassificeerd door middel van een kunstkritisch discours. Zo is film sinds de jaren zestig in aanzien gestegen (Baumann, 2001) en worden genres als televisie, jazz en rockmuziek ook steeds meer gezien als esthetisch te behandelen culturele producten (Bielby

& Bielby, 2004; Lopes, 2002; Regev, 1994). Een van de belangrijkste beoordelingsinstanties binnen de filmkritiek is het journalistieke werk in dagbladen. Kunstwerken kunnen niet direct worden beoordeeld op gelijkwaardigheid of universele kenmerken en moeten om deze reden dan ook geclassificeerd worden (zie paragraaf 3.1). Deze classificaties bestaan om een duidelijk overzicht te verschaffen, maar ook om kwaliteit in termen als 'hoog' of 'laag' af te kunnen bakenen. Hoewel er nooit een absolute consensus zal bestaan over de kwaliteit van kunst en cultuur, kunnen deze classificaties van professionele critici, wel dienen als richtlijnen voor wat kwaliteit inhoudt. Binnen het kunstkritisch discours is het belangrijk om te weten dat de symbolische lading, die kunstwerken met zich meedragen, even zwaar tellen als het uiterlijk vertoon of de directe boodschap. Het innemen van een esthetische dispositie, dat volgens Bourdieu (1984) alleen mogelijk is wanneer men hoger opgeleid is of uit een hoger milieu komt, is dan ook van belang bij het beoordelen van deze culturele producten. Vorm dient boven functie te worden gesteld, wat alleen kan met een adequaat niveau van cultureel kapitaal (Bourdieu, 1984), omdat alleen dan het kunstwerk met de juiste intentie zal worden bekeken.

Om deze verschillende genres goed in te kunnen delen wordt gebruik gemaakt van de eerder genoemde classificaties binnen dit kunstkritisch discours. Op het gebied van film zal ik mij vooral richten op het eerdere werk van Baumann (2001) om deze classificaties te onderscheiden. Zo beschrijft hij de ontwikkeling van het intellectuele filmdiscours, oftewel het kunstkritisch discours, in Amerika. Volgens hem vond er een verschuiving plaats waardoor er in de recensies meer gebruik werd gemaakt van specifieke 'high-art' termen die zouden refereren naar film als kunst. Het gaat hier om termen als 'kunstwerk(en)', 'artistiek' en 'meesterlijk' (Baumann, 2001, 2007). Daarnaast heeft Baumann aangetoond dat er aandacht werd besteed aan de context en interpretatie van de films. Om dit aan te tonen stelde hij acht kritische concepten en technieken op, namelijk: (1) Positief en negatief commentaar, (2) Het benoemen van de regisseur bij naam, (3) Een vergelijking tussen regisseurs, (4) Een vergelijking tussen films, (5) Interpretatie van de film, (6) Het positieve in het slechte zien, (7) De tegenstelling tussen entertainment en kunst en (8) De afwijzing van 'het simpele' ('too easy to enjoy') (Baumann, 2001, 2007). Het is van belang om te begrijpen dat het kunstkritisch discours gevormd is om complexe kunstwerken te duiden en bestuderen. Om dus gebruik te kunnen maken van dit specifieke discours mag verwacht worden dat de gebruiker kennis heeft van het betreffende onderwerp, de kunststroom en de context.

Ondanks bovenstaande informatie is het niet zo dat het kunstkritisch discours uitsluitend gebruikt kan worden door gerenommeerde critici of deskundigen. Het is echter wel zo dat de deskundigen en critici de maatstaaf voor het discours bepalen. Op deze manier blijft het discours besloten en wordt het alleen gebruikt binnen de juiste context: het beoordelen van films, of andere kunst, vanuit een esthetische dispositie. Baumann (2002) toont namelijk aan dat naast de verschuiving van het taalgebruik door critici, het publiek ook

anders reageerde op films vanaf de jaren '60. Uitspraken van de gerenommeerde critici werden vaker aangehaald om preferenties en smaken voor wat betreft films te duiden. Het is dus zo dat 'het gewone publiek' gebruik ging maken van het kunstkritisch discours. Het is echter niet zo dat 'het gewone publiek' het discours heeft bepaald of veranderd (Baumann, 2002). Het kunstkritisch discours wordt dan ook geplaatst in het 'restricted field'. Binnen dit onderzoek zal gebruik worden gemaakt van bovenstaand discours, wat zal worden afgezet tegen het populaire discours. De samenstelling van de variabelen om de verschillende discours te meten en bestuderen staat verder uitgelegd in hoofdstuk 4: Methode.

3.5 Film als entertainment - het populaire discours

In tegenstelling tot het 'high-brow' taalgebruik van het kunstkritische discours uit paragraaf 3.4, gaat het binnen het populaire discours juist om 'low-brow' taalgebruik en aanduidingen. In tegenstelling tot de pure esthetische dispositie, wordt hier gebruik gemaakt van populaire esthetiek, die gebaseerd is op de continuïteit tussen de kunstvorm en het (dagelijks) leven (Bourdieu, 1984:32). Hierbinnen staan beoordelingen op basis van functie, in tegenstelling tot vorm, centraal. Het gaat hier om een verlangen naar actieve participatie tussen het publiek en het product. Hierbij kan bijvoorbeeld gedacht worden aan de identificatie met karakters, de herkenbaarheid van het verhaal, de plot en de inhoud (Bourdieu, 1984). In tegenstelling tot de esthetische dispositie van Bourdieu (1984), gaat het hier juist om de vermakelijkheid van het product. Vermaak legt een directe link met emoties en gevoelens die teweeg kunnen worden gebracht door het mediale beeld en/of geluid. In tegenstelling tot de symbolische en contextuele waarde die wordt toegekend aan 'kunst' wordt binnen het populaire discours meer gerefereerd aan directe beleving, ontspanning, sensatie en dergelijke, oftewel: de entertainmentwaarde. Deze entertainmentwaarde, plus de drang tot actieve participatie, kunnen dan ook een mogelijke uitleg vormen voor de hoeveelheid geschreven online reviews van 'het gewone volk'. Er staan duizenden recensies op websites als imdb.com en rottentomatoes.com. De affiniteit voor film en de drang tot participatie maken echter wel dat deze recensies benaderd worden vanuit een populair discours.

Ook binnen dit populaire discours, waarbinnen dus de entertainmentbeleving wordt beschreven, wordt gebruik gemaakt van verschillende criteria. Verschillende voorgaande onderzoeken, van onder andere Bosshart & Macconi (1998) en van Venrooij & Schmutz (2006) hebben beschreven hoe de entertainmentbeleving van 'spel', gaming en muziek tot stand komt en welke variabelen deze beleving dan duiden. Binnen dit onderzoek wordt verondersteld dat de eerder gevormde criteria ook geldig zullen zijn voor het genre: film. Een aantal van deze criteria betreffen:

(1) Negatieve houding ten opzichte van 'hoge' kunst, (2) Gerichtheid op de 'beleving', (3) Gerichtheid op het publiek (4) Referenties aan het alledaagse (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2006), (5) Psychologische rust, (6) Leukheid/grappigheid ('enjoyment'), (7) Realisme,

(8) Stimulatie van de betrokkenen, (9) Betrokkenheid (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998). Daarnaast wordt expressieve subjectiviteit, met betrekking tot populaire genres, ook meegerekend als variabele. Deze expressieve subjectiviteit staat tegenover de inname van een 'hoog' of 'laag' standpunt. Hiermee bedoel ik dat een subjectief waardeoordeel wordt gegeven in plaats van dat er een onderbouwd objectief waardeoordeel wordt geveld met betrekking tot het gerecenseerde product (Bielby & Bielby, 2004). De manier waarop bovenstaande variabelen, inclusief de variabelen benoemd binnen het kunstkritisch discours, binnen dit onderzoek worden verwerkt, staat uitgelegd in het vierde hoofdstuk.

Het kunstkritisch discours en het populaire discours zijn dus duidelijk twee gescheiden velden. Binnen het complete film van culturele productie (in dit geval film) bestaan ze echter binnen zowel het veld van de grootschalige cultuurproductie als binnen het 'restricted field'. Het is echter zo dat in het 'restricted field' het de critici zijn die geacht worden het kunstkritisch discours te hanteren en een sturende functie te bekleden voor wat betreft de smaakpatronen van het volk. Het populair discours daarentegen is er voor de 'gewone consument' om hun ervaring met betrekking tot film te verwoorden. De online filmrecensies op websites als imdb.com zouden dan ook geen bedreiging moeten vormen voor de status van de professionele critici. Echter wijzen studies naar gelijkwaardige onderwerpen ons in een andere richting. Onderzoek van Tancer et. al. (2009) wijst bijvoorbeeld uit dat beoordelingssites van vakanties gebruikt worden als leidraad, in plaats van het klassieke sterrensysteem. Daarnaast wijst onderzoek van David en Pinch (2005) met betrekking tot Amazon.com ons in precies diezelfde richting. De verklaring hiervoor schuilt in de opkomst van web 2.0 en die applicaties die dit web dragen. Hieromtrent is meer te lezen in de komende paragrafen.

3.6 Opkomst web 2.0.

Om een beter inzicht te krijgen in de manier waarop de complete besproken probleemstelling heeft kunnen ontstaan, moet eerst gekeken worden naar de bron. De bron betreft in dit geval het zogenaamde 'web 2.0', in tegenstelling tot 'web 1.0'. De tegenstelling schuilt in de verschoven verhouding tussen gebruikers van informatie en producenten van informatie (O'Reilly, 2005). In tegenstelling tot het web 1.0 kan men niet alleen maar informatie 'van het web plukken', maar kan men het er ook zelf invoegen. O'Reilly (2005) noemt dit dan ook wel de opkomst van het 'participatory web'. Dit omdat iedere gebruiker actief kan bijdragen aan het creëren van de digitale (informatie) wereld.

Één van de grote veranderingen is dat 'het web' niet alleen maar meer geldt als medium. Het fungeert nu ook als persoonlijke profileringsplatform (O'Reilly, 2005). Hiermee bedoel ik dat mensen zichzelf kunnen uiten en kunnen besluiten deze uitingen te delen met de wereld, via het wereldwijde web. Het gegeven dat dit ook tot de mogelijkheden behoorde bij 'web 1.0' klopt. Het wezenlijke verschil schuilt echter in het gegeven dat het nu

voor iedereen veel makkelijker gemaakt is. Er is niet langer een gedegen kennis nodig van CSS of HTML codering om een webpagina of blog in elkaar te zetten. Filmpjes kunnen makkelijk op het web geplaatst worden via Youtube.com en foto's kunnen gedeeld worden via Flickr.com. Daarbij komt dat de drempel voor actieve participatie verlaagd wordt, aangezien de 'leercurve' van de applicaties verlaagd wordt. O'Reilly (2005) stelde een schema met doorontwikkelde applicaties en methoden, zoals te zien in figuur (3), om dit te verduidelijken.

Web 1.0		Web 2.0		Web 1.0		Web 2.0	
Domain name speculation	-->	Search engine optimization		DoubleClick	-->	Google AdSense	
Page vies	-->	Cost per klik		Ofoto	-->	Flickr	
Screen scraping	-->	Web services		Akamai	-->	BitTorrent	
Publishing	-->	Participation		Mp3.com	-->	Napster	
Content management systems	-->	Wikis		Britannica Online	-->	Wikipedia	
Directories (taxonomy)	-->	Tagging ("folksonomy")		Personal websites	-->	Blogging	
Stickiness	-->	Syndication		Evite	-->	Upcoming.org and EVDB	

Figuur (3): Uitleg web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005)

Om bovenstaand voorbeeld te verduidelijken zal ik twee voorbeelden uitlichten, om te beginnen met de mp3.com → napster. Mp3.com was één van de eerste webpagina's waar muziek kon worden gedownload. Dit kon echter alleen vanuit 'éénzijdige participatie'. Hiermee bedoel ik dat de beheerder(s) van de website muziek plaatsten op de pagina, waarna gebruikers de muziek konden downloaden. De gebruikers konden zelf echter geen muziek op de pagina plaatsen. Napster (en het peer-to-peer systeem) hebben daar verandering in gebracht. Via applicaties als Napster (en later ook KaZaa en LimeWire) konden mensen zelf hun muziek uploaden en de bestanden laten vastleggen (seeden) in een database. Andere gebruikers konden deze muziek vervolgens weer downloaden (leechen), zodat een netwerk van gebruikers ontstond die in elkaars behoeften konden voorzien (O'Reilly, 2005).

Het tweede voorbeeld dat ik graag uit wil lichten, betreft de overgang van Ofoto naar Flickr. In tegenstelling tot mp3.com was Ofoto één van de eerste sites waarop de gebruiker zelf foto's kon uploaden. Dit verliep echter via een moeilijk proces waarin de bestanden bijvoorbeeld nog gekaderd moesten worden. De ontwikkeling naar een site als Flickr.com (of photobucket.com), heeft ervoor gezorgd dat het uploaden (en delen) van foto's een stuk makkelijker is gaan verlopen. Iedereen kan de foto's uploaden en delen binnen een netwerk van andere uploaders.

Web 2.0, of het 'participatory web', draait dus om inbreng. Inbreng van informatie binnen een geheel dat verbonden is als één groot netwerk. Deze inbreng kan alleen ontstaan vanuit de participatie van de gebruiker(s), plus de simplificatie van de middelen om de inbreng van deze gebruiker(s) te sturen. Online reviews, één van de vele vormen van mogelijke inbreng van gebruikers, betreffen een wezenlijk onderdeel van web 2.0. Dit deel

valt onder de noemer 'user created content', dat uitgelegd wordt in de volgende paragraaf.

3.7 User created content (UCC).

User generated reviews (UGR) zijn een vorm van user created content (UCC) geplaatst op het internet (OECD, 2007). Dat deze reviews user created content betreffen houdt in dat ze voor en door gebruikers gemaakt zijn. UCC ontstaat alleen vanuit een drang tot participatie en creativiteit, waarbij gekeken wordt naar persoonlijke voldoening (OECD, 2007). Hiermee bedoel ik dat de gebruiker probeert in zijn behoeften naar participatie te voorzien door content op het web te plaatsen. Op een website als IMDb.com kan deze persoonlijke voldoening beschreven worden als de uiting van kennis of de uiting van interpretatie. Hiermee bedoel ik dat de mensen die reviews plaatsen, vaak betrokkenheid voelen bij hetgene waarover zij schrijven. Om deze reden willen zij dan ook hun mening uiten, of hun expertise op dit gebied aan de rest van de wereld tonen (McMillan, 2006). De UCC zorgt ervoor, dat binnen een platform als IMDb.com, de gebruiker gestimuleerd wordt om andere manieren van distributie, productie en toegang tot informatie uit te proberen en ook daadwerkelijk te gebruiken. Deze manier van content distributie wordt dan ook alsnog populairder onder de gebruikers van het world wide web. Dit komt volgens McMillan (2006) door het gevoel van 'inbreng' wat bij de gebruiker(s) ontstaat. Zij krijgen het gevoel dat hun acties op het internet invloed hebben op de keuzepatronen van anderen en op de vormgeving van de virtuele ruimte zelf. Dit slaat dan ook direct terug op de drang tot participatie, zoals besproken in paragraaf 3.6.

3.8 User generated reviews – filmrecensies online.

Eerder onderzoek van onder andere Tancer (2009), David & Pinch (2005), Duan & Whinston (2008) Vermeulen & Seegers (2009), Chatterjee (2001) beschrijven de opkomst en de relevantie van online reviews en zetten deze af tegen het belang van reviews, geschreven door gerenommeerde critici. User generated reviews (UGR) betreffen, zoals eerder besproken, een vorm van user created content (UCC) geplaatst op het internet (OECD, 2007). Een van de bekendere websites waarop de UGR's geplaatst kunnen worden betreft IMDb.com (International Movie Database). De drang tot participatie wordt voornamelijk aangedragen als drijfveer voor het plaatsen van content op het web. Daarbij komt, dat binnen de door mij gekozen case, er veel sprake is van interpretatie. Hiermee bedoel ik dat de strips waarop de films gebaseerd zijn, de contextuele achtergrondkennis vormen voor het schrijven van een review. De betrokkenheid van de schrijvers, zoals aangetoond door McMillan (2006), maakt dan ook dat deze schrijvers veelal verstand hebben van deze contextuele aspecten. De vraag die hieruit naar voren komt is of de kennis en authenticiteit van deze participerende gebruikers dan wezenlijk verschilt van de gerenommeerde critici in

Amerikaanse dagbladen? Binnen mijn onderzoek wil ik dan ook antwoord kunnen geven op de vraag op welke manier UGR's verschillen van offline reviews.

Volgens Tancer (2009) is het zo dat deze UGR's steeds meer aan vertrouwen bij het raadplegende volk winnen. Zo maakt hij een vergelijking tussen online reviews van hotels, op tripadvisor.com, en het 'oude systeem' dat werkt met sterren. Binnen zijn onderzoek komt hij tot de conclusie dat deze 'nieuwe' vorm van classificatie steeds meer als leidraad voor keuzepatronen gebruikt wordt. Voor dat een vakantie geboekt wordt, wordt eerst het gemiddeld cijfer op [tripadvisor](http://tripadvisor.com) bekeken. Aangezien deze UGR's populairder worden in gebruik en steeds meer dienen als graadmeter voor culturele smaakpatronen en voorkeuren (Tancer, 2009; Duan & Whinston, 2008) is het belangrijk om in de gaten te houden waarom deze reviews geplaatst worden en door wie. Keen (2007) werpt daar echter tegenin dat websites als tripadvisor.com en imdb.com, niet gebruikt zouden mogen worden als graadmeter van smaak en voorkeur. Hoewel het de smaak en voorkeur van het collectief representeert, vindt er geen degelijke controle plaats over de geplaatste content. Daarnaast komt uit onderzoek van David & Pinch (2005) naar voren dat er op de website amazon.com, veel gebruik gemaakt wordt van gefalsificeerde reviews. Dit lijkt in te haken op de stellingname van Andrew Keen ten opzichte van web 2.0. Echter is het zo dat er op deze sites gebruik gemaakt wordt van classificatieschema's, vergelijkbaar met het 'oude schema gebaseerd op sterren' die gelden voor hotels en dergelijken. Deze schema's zijn gebaseerd op een waardering die uitgaat van de beoordeling van professionele critici geuit in een bepaald aantal sterren. Deze waardering strekt meestal van één tot vijf sterren, waarin één ster de slechtste beoordeling betreft en vijf sterren de beste. Op websites als amazon.com en imdb.com wordt gebruik gemaakt van een dergelijk classificeringssysteem om aan te duiden welke 'reviewers' een grote hoeveelheid recensies hebben geplaatst en wat de kwaliteit hiervan is (David & Pinch, 2005). Er kan mogelijk zelfs gesteld worden dat aan deze 'reviewers' een status van gerenommeerde critici wordt gegeven naar aanleiding van de hoeveelheid en, wellicht belangrijker, de kwaliteit van dit werk.

Wanneer we terugkomen op de onderlinge verhouding tussen UGR's en de professionele filmrecensies, kan mogelijk zelfs gesteld worden dat ook deze verhouding aan verandering onderhevig is. De vergelijkbare onderzoeken van onder andere Tancer (2009), David & Pinch (2005) en Duan & Whinston (2008) wijzen ons dan ook in deze richting. Dit zou betekenen dat de rol van de gerenommeerde critici, als gatekeepers van kwaliteit en complexiteit, wordt overgenomen door de schrijvers van de UGR's, wat dan ook geldt als aanleiding voor dit onderzoek. Deze user generated reviews vallen echter vooralsnog binnen het veld van de grootschalige cultuurproductie, aangezien zij door consumenten zonder het vereiste cultureel kapitaal worden geschreven. Dit omdat er geen vorm van scholing aan vooraf gaat en omdat er geen degelijke controle is betreffende de geplaatste content (Bourdieu, 1989; Keen, 2007). Dit alles in tegenstelling tot de recensies van gerenommeerde

critici. Desalniettemin tonen de eerder genoemde onderzoeken aan dat UGR's een steeds prominentere rol beginnen te vervullen in de keuzepatronen van de consument. De vraag die binnen dit onderzoek dan ook behandeld wordt is of UGR's wezenlijk verschillen van de professionele recensies en of er ook overeenkomsten te vinden zijn. Dit wordt gedaan door recensies van beide partijen te analyseren en te meten op de twee eerder benoemde discoursen.

3.9 Onderzoeksvraag, deelvragen en hypotheses

Binnen voorgaand hoofdstuk heb ik mij bezig gehouden met de uitleg van de concepten die van belang zijn bij het beschrijven en bespreken van de door mij geopperde probleemstelling. In navolging van (voornamelijk) Bourdieu (1984, 1987) heb ik de kapitalen- en veldtheorie uiteengezet en beschreven hoe deze theorieën zich verhouden tot film als artistiek product. Binnen het complete veld van culturele filmproductie bevinden zich twee velden: het veld van de grootschalige cultuurproductie en het 'restricted field'. De professionele critici beoefenen hun functie vanuit dit laatstgenoemde veld waarin gestreefd wordt naar waardering van 'peers' (gelijkwaardigen). Het kunstkritisch discours omtrent film, dat zich is gaan ontwikkelen rond de jaren zestig van de vorige eeuw, wordt dan ook geacht te worden gehanteerd door deze professionele critici. Zij zijn dan ook de gatekeepers van film als kunst en de beoordelaars van smaak en kwaliteit. Deze positie van 'gatekeeper' ligt echter onder vuur door de opkomst van de user generated review en het vertrouwen dat de consument hier aan lijkt te schenken. Web 2.0, oftewel het participatory web, maakt het mogelijk voor elke gebruiker om naar hartenlust content toe te voegen op het web. Filmrecensies zijn hier slechts een klein (maar belangrijk) onderdeel van. Onderzoeken van onder andere Tancer (2009), Duan & Whinston (2008) en David & Pinch (2005), wijzen uit dat online recensies, geplaatst door 'het gewone volk' steeds vaker worden gebruikt als leidraad voor keuzepatronen van ditzelfde 'gewone volk'. Hierin schuilt dan ook de probleemstelling, die simpelweg inhoudt dat de positie van (cultuur)critici onder vuur ligt door de opkomst van de UGR. De vraag is of de bezorgdheid om de positie van de kritiek, en dus de goede smaak van het publiek, terecht is, en of de verschillende soorten recensies eigenlijk van vergelijkbare kwaliteit zijn?

Binnen mijn onderzoek maak ik gebruik van een hoofdvraag en een aantal deelvragen om hierop antwoord te geven. De door mij gebruikte hoofdvraag is:

Van welk kritisch filmdiscours maken auteurs van online 'user generated' reviews en offline krantenrecensies van comic book adaptations gebruik, en welke overeenkomsten en/of verschillen zijn er te vinden?

De discoursen waar in de onderzoeksvraag over gesproken wordt betreffen het populaire

entertainment ('laag') discours en het professionele kunstzinnige ('hoog') discours, zoals zij ook beschreven staan in paragrafen 3.4 en 3.5 van dit hoofdstuk.

Om tot een antwoord te komen op de door mij opgestelde onderzoeksvraag zal gebruik gemaakt worden van een aantal deelvragen. Deze verschillende deelvragen zijn:

D1: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de online user generated reviews van de CBA?

D2: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de offline krantenrecensies van de CBA?

D3: Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

D4: Wat zijn de verschillen tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

Aan de hand van de eerder vermelde probleemstelling, plus de uitwerking van het theoretisch kader binnen dit hoofdstuk, heb ik ook een aantal hypothesen opgesteld. Deze hypothesen betreffen:

H1a: Er is een wezenlijk verschil tussen professionele reviews en user generated reviews.

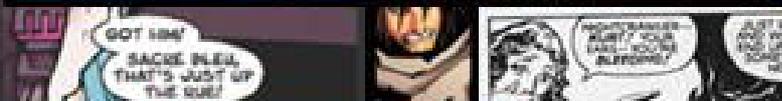
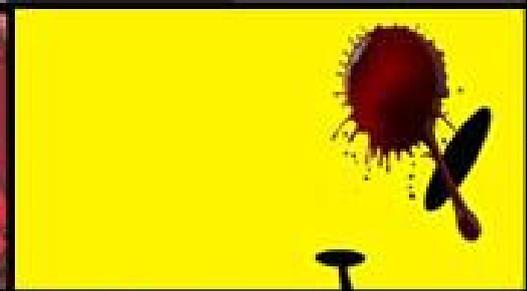
H1b: Professionele filmcritici handelen met meer contextueel inzicht en objectiviteit

H1c: User generated reviews zijn veelal opgebouwd vanuit persoonlijke interpretatie

H2a: Het kunstkritische discours maakt geen gebruik van het populaire discours.

H2b: Het populaire discours maakt wel gebruik van het kunstkritische discours.

Hoe mijn onderzoek precies in elkaar steekt staat verder uitgelegd in het volgende hoofdstuk (Methode).



4. Methode

4.1 Aanpak.

Binnen mijn onderzoek ben ik op zoek gegaan naar mogelijke verschillen en overeenkomsten voor wat betreft de twee soorten filmrecensies, zoals door mij behandeld in voorgaande hoofdstukken. Hierbij is niet alleen gelet op de gebruikte discoursen, maar ook op de afkomst en interpretatie van de schrijvers zelf. Zo heb ik mijn onderzoek beperkt tot schrijvers van Amerikaanse afkomst en schrijvers voor Amerikaanse kwaliteitkranten. De beperking tot Amerika, als onderzoeksgebied, schuilt vooral in het gegeven dat veel van de besproken stripboeken en verfilmingen hiervan, afkomstig zijn uit Amerika. Hollywood is één van de grootste spelers op het gebied van stripboekverfilmingen en zal de interpretatie binnen de recensies hierin dan ook wellicht sturen. Gebruikmakend van het actorperspectief (Wester, 2006) kan een onderzoeker, inclusief het onderzochte veld waar hij/zij onderzoek naar doet, zichzelf dan ook niet los zien van de culturele waarden die gelden binnen zijn/haar eigen cultuur. Een geschreven review, betreffende een Hollywood product, kan dus ook niet los gezien worden van de cultuur van diegene die verantwoordelijk is voor de review. De productionele omstandigheden (als zijnde waarden die gelden binnen een specifieke cultuur) zullen dus meetellen binnen het proces van het toekennen van waardeoordelen binnen deze reviews.

Om antwoord te kunnen geven op de door mij gestelde onderzoeksvraag plus deelvragen, is dan ook gebruik gemaakt van een comparatieve onderzoeksmethode. Aan de basis hiervan ligt de vergelijkende (comparatieve) functie van het onderzoek. Daarnaast is comparatief onderzoek gericht op het vinden en erkennen van diversiteit. Dit om deze diversiteit vervolgens toe te lichten en beschrijven aan de hand van theoretische raamwerken (veelal op basis van eerder verricht onderzoek) (Wester & Peters, 2004). Om dit te verwezenlijken wordt binnen dit onderzoek gebruik gemaakt van een kwantitatieve content analyse. Daarnaast is de uitwerking van het, nader toe te lichten, coderingsschema ook onderdeel van het kwantitatieve gedeelte van het complete onderzoek. Deze verdeling is ontstaan naar aanleiding van eerder verricht onderzoek, naar onder andere reviews op het gebied van (interactieve) gaming (Deuze et. al., 2007), online boeken verkoop (David & Pinch, 2005) en rendabiliteit van extensieve filmmarketing (Moon et. al., 2010; Duan & Whinston, 2008). Hierbij is getracht soortgelijke onderzoeksmethoden aan te houden.

De door mij geselecteerde casestudy betreft een twintigtal films. Hiervan is de helft gebaseerd op 'bekende stripboeken' en de andere helft gebaseerd op 'minder bekende stripboeken'. Wanneer de strips/graphic novels dus minder bekend zijn bij het grote publiek, dient dit mee te rekenen in de interpretatie en beoordeling van de reviewer(s) en de classificatie van de reviewer(s). Het is bijvoorbeeld begrijpelijk dat het 'gewone volk' wel weet dat de *Spiderman* films een stripboek als basis hebben, maar dat men niet weet dat een film als *Road to Perdition* (2002) zo'n zelfde basis heeft. Binnen mijn onderzoek ga ik er

dan ook van uit dat deze contextuele kennis wel voorradig is bij de gerenommeerde critici, maar niet altijd bij 'het gewone volk'. Dit vormt dan ook één van de redenen waarom de reviews qua inhoud zullen verschillen (zie H1a).

4.2 Dataverzameling

Aangezien de gebruikte recensies tekstuele representatie van beoordelingen betreffen, lijkt een coderingsschema een goede manier om hier degelijke informatie aan te ontlenu. Dit omdat deze gegevens op overzichtelijke wijze geanalyseerd kunnen worden (Wester & Peters, 2004). Om een zo representatief mogelijke steekproef te houden heb ik besloten om een aantal verschillende filmreviews te selecteren, met betrekking tot CBA's. Hiervoor heb ik, zoals eerder vermeld, twintig filmtitels uitgekozen. De door mij geselecteerde films zijn terug te vinden in bijlage (1): overzicht geselecteerde films. Bij deze geselecteerde films wil ik de kanttekening schetsen dat in de rechter rij niet wordt bedoeld dat de films minder bekend zijn of dat de status van deze films als zijnde 'minder' wordt beoordeeld, maar dat de comics/graphic novels waarop zij zijn gebaseerd, minder bekend zijn bij het grote publiek.

De periode waar onderzoek naar verricht zal worden valt logischerwijs tussen de eerste en laatste datum van uitgave van de door mij geselecteerde films. Dit betreft tussen 13-05-1994 en 06-03-2009. Dit geeft mij een onderzoeksgebied van ongeveer vijftien jaar, verspreid over een twintigtal films. Nu is mijn onderzoek niet gericht op de films zelf, maar op de beoordeling hiervan. Per film zal dus een tiental reviews worden gecodeerd en geanalyseerd. Per film zal een vijftal professionele offline reviews worden aangehaald en een vijftal user generated reviews van imdb.com. Op deze manier ontstaat een representatieve verhouding van een totaal van honderd reviews per sector. Dus honderd professionele reviews, verspreid over de twintig films en honderd user generated reviews, verspreid over de twintig films. De verzameling van de user generated reviews zal, zoals eerder besproken, gebeuren via de website van imdb.com. Dit omdat imdb.com over een groot aantal recensies beschikt en het om die reden dan ook een goede basis vormt om een dataverzameling te starten. De dataverzameling op het gebied van de professionele offline reviews zal gebeuren via een aantal kwaliteitskranten. Deze selectie is gebaseerd in Amerikaanse kranten. Een aantal voorbeelden hiervan zijn: *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The San Fransisco Chronicle* en de *Houston Chronicle*. Er is specifiek gekozen voor dergelijke kranten omdat er op deze manier een brede landelijke spreiding ontstaat en omdat de critici die voor deze kranten schrijven de status van gerenomeerd criticus dragen. Ook hierbij is gekeken naar de classificatie van de desbetreffende schrijvers van de recensies. Dit is gedaan op de website van rottentomatoes (www.rottentomatoes.com). Dit betreft een vergelijkbare site, voor wat betreft imdb.com, maar richt zich vooral op recensies van gerenommeerde critici. Aan deze critici worden, evenals op imdb.com, classificaties gegeven, om de lezers te informeren over de betrouwbaarheid van de recensie(s).

De gegevens, verkregen aan de hand van het coderingsschema zoals besproken in de komende paragraaf, zullen worden verwerkt in een SPSS databestand waarna de verschillende variabelen uit het codeerschema (zie paragraaf 4.3) apart kunnen worden geanalyseerd. Deze te meten variabelen komen voort uit de eerder besproken theorie en probleemstelling. Zo zijn de classificaties van Bosshart & Macconi (1998), Venrooij & Schmutz (2007), Baumann (2001, 2007) en Bielby & Bielby (2004) en anderen, gebruikt om de variabelen voor het codeerschema op te stellen. Aan de hand van hiervan is een schema opgesteld, waarin gewerkt wordt met SPSS. Aan de hand van de analyse van de gegevens, verkregen via SPSS, kunnen simpele frequentie analyses gemaakt worden om zo gemiddelden en variabelen apart te meten en vergelijken.

4.3 Codeerschema.

Zoals een aantal keer eerder vermeld, maak ik binnen mijn onderzoek gebruik van een codeerschema, om gegevens vanuit de reviews te kunnen destilleren. Er zijn twee verschillende soorten coderingen van toepassing, namelijk: (1) de codering aan de hand van het kunstkritisch discours en (2) de codering aan de hand van het populaire discours. Beide coderingsmethoden zijn samengesteld vanuit een aantal variabelen, die ontleend zijn aan eerder genoemde theoretische raamwerken en schrijvers. Het kunstkritisch discours bestaat uit een zestiental variabelen, te weten: (1) Positief/negatief commentaar, (2) Regisseur is benoemd, (3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs, (4) Vergelijking tussen films, (5) Interpretatie van de film, (6) Benoeming van de maatschappelijke context, (7) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd (8) Connectie met hoge kunst, (9) Het gebruik high-art termen, (10) Originaliteit/ innovatie, (11) Complexiteit/ambigüiteit, (12) Serieusheid/intelligent, (13) De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk, (14) Subtiliteit/ geloofwaardigheid, (15) Focus op acteurs/ talent en (16) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur.

De codering van het populaire discours verloopt echter volgens de volgende dertien variabelen, namelijk: (1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst, (2) Gevoel van participatie, (3) Emotionele authenticiteit, (4) Humor/ grappigheid, (5) Spanning/suspens, (6) Ontroering, (7) Ontwikkeling karakters, (8) Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek, (9) Film als product, (10) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s), (11) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel', (12) Connectie met populaire cultuur en (13) Entertainmentwaarde.

Binnen dit hoofdstuk zal ik aandacht besteden aan alle aparte variabelen, om zo uitleg te geven over het ontstaan van het coderingsschema. Hiermee begin ik bij de uitleg van de variabelen omtrent het kunstkritisch discours.

4.4 Het kunstkritisch discours.

(1) Positief/ negatief commentaar:

Kunstvormen dienen op een complexe manier benaderd te worden. Dit in tegenstelling tot

populaire cultuur of entertainment, waarbij het draait om ervaring en gevoel. Baumann (2001) spreekt daarom dan ook over de opgestelde techniek van 'merit in failure' (het goede in het slechte). Hiermee bedoelt hij dat een (gerenommeerde) criticus vaak nog goede dingen uit een slechte film weet te belichten. Natuurlijk kan deze techniek ook voor precies het tegenovergestelde gelden. Er kan dus ook bedoeld worden op slechte aspecten binnen een uitermate goede film. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan wordt gegeven op rottentomatoes.com, betreffende de film *Hot tub timemachine* (2010), waarover het volgende wordt geschreven: "*Its flagrantly silly script -- and immensely likable cast -- make up for most of its flaws.*"

(2) Regisseur is benoemd:

Deze variabele is deels ontleend aan Baumann (2001), in navolging van Bourdieu (1984, 1987), die beweert dat serieuze kunst erkenning dient te krijgen door de benoeming van de kunstenaar in kwestie. Daarnaast wordt deze variabele ontleend aan de vestiging van de auteurtheorie van Truffaut (1954). Naar aanleiding van deze theorie gingen regisseurs een meer prominente rol vervullen binnen het productieproces van film. Deze theorie gaat daarnaast uit van het idee dat iets alleen kunst kan zijn wanneer er sprake is van een autonome kunstenaar (een erkende en vrije kunstenaar). Dit onderscheidt film als kunst immers van massaproductie (production code films).

(3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs:

De vergelijking met andere regisseurs maakt dat het product binnen een bepaalde context wordt geplaatst. Deze context maakt het voor zowel de schrijver, als de lezer, makkelijker om het product tegen andere producten af te zetten en deze onderling te vergelijken. Dit impliceert, volgens Baumann (2001), een complexer oordeel over het product zelf, wat een kenmerkend gegeven is voor hoge kunst (Baumann, 2001: 415).

(4) Vergelijking tussen films:

Net als bij de vergelijking tussen regisseurs, maakt deze variabele het mogelijk dat het product in een andere context geplaatst wordt. Op deze manier kan het product op een complexere en verfijndere manier geanalyseerd en bestudeerd worden, om zo een beter waardeoordeel over het product zelf te kunnen geven (Baumann, 2001; Eitner, 1961). Daarnaast toont een vergelijking tussen films een vorm van expertise aan. Het waardeoordeel staat hierdoor niet op zichzelf, maar wordt onderbouwd op basis van deze uiting van expertise. Binnen deze variabele is het belangrijk om aan te geven dat het niet gaat om het (slechts) benoemen van andere films, maar om een duidelijke vergelijking met andere films, waardoor het product binnen een andere context geplaatst kan worden. Een

vergelijking met andere filmstromingen en/of kunstvormen wordt ook niet onder deze variabele geschaard. Dit valt namelijk onder variabele 7: Connectie met hogere kunst.

(5) Interpretatie van de film:

Aangezien film als kunstvorm een complexere benadering vereist dan populaire cultuur en entertainment, geldt dit ook voor de interpretatie van het product. Volgens Baumann (2001) heeft film als vorm van hogere kunst altijd een symbolische lading en/of waarde. De verbeelding van de regisseur wordt door middel van stijleffecten en metaforen aan het publiek overgebracht, welke het op hun beurt moeten zien 'te ontcijferen'. De boodschap die de metaforen en stijleffecten dragen behoren ook tot deze zelfde variabele. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is de expliciete boodschap van de film *Blade Runner* (1982), waarin een duidelijke kritische maatschappelijke boodschap zit verwerkt. Bij deze variabele worden de boodschap zelf, evenals de interpretatie hiervan, meegeteld.

(6) Benoeming maatschappelijke context:

De benoeming van de context van een film draagt, evenals bij voorgaande variabelen, bij aan de expertise van de schrijver. De benoeming van bijvoorbeeld maatschappelijke contextuele omstandigheden kan van invloed zijn op de manier waarop men naar een bepaalde film gaat kijken. Onder maatschappelijke context worden verschillende actuele omstandigheden geschaard (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003). Hierbij kan gedacht worden aan de koppeling tussen de film en recente gebeurtenissen, zoals dat gebeurt in een recensie betreffende *The Dark Knight* (2008) in de New York Times van 17 Juli 2008, geschreven door Manhola Dargis: *"From certain angles, the city the Joker threatens looks like New York, but it would be reductive to read the film too directly through the prism of 9/11 and its aftermath."*

(7) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd:

In het geval van de CBA is het belangrijk het originele werk als context te behandelen. Op deze manier kan de film vergeleken worden met het bronmateriaal en kan op basis van deze vergelijking een onderbouwd waardeoordeel gegeven worden. Een duidelijke verwijzing van de recensent naar het originele bronmateriaal valt dus onder deze variabele. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is een stuk uit de Chicago Tribune van 17 oktober 2007, betreffende de film *30 Days of Night* (2007), geschreven door: Michael Phillips: *"The script is simple stuff, simpler than the graphic novel, which at least managed to devote a page or two to the vampires' back story"*.

(8) Connectie met hoge kunst:

Deze variabele wordt ontleend aan Van Venrooij en Schmutz (2006). Het gaat hier om de referentie aan hogere kunstvormen, met betrekking tot het besproken product. Zoals

besproken bij de vergelijking tussen films, kan hier ook bedoeld worden op een vergelijking met verschillende kunststromen, zoals de beeldende kunst of fotografie. In het geval van de CBA zal wellicht gerefereerd worden naar het bronmateriaal als zijnde literaire kunstvorm (graphic novels). Het belangrijkste aspect binnen deze variabele betreft het in verband brengen met kunst. Deze variabele draait niet om het gebruik van 'high-art' termen, maar naar de verwijzing naar kunst op zich. Bij kunstvormen in deze zin moet gedacht worden aan: de beeldende kunst, fotografie, opera, theater en dergelijke gerenommeerde kunstvormen, in tegenstelling tot populair vermaak als popmuziek en graffiti bijvoorbeeld.

(9) Het gebruik van high-art termen:

De negende variabele wordt ontleend aan Baumann (2001). Het gaat hier om het taalgebruik dat de recensenten hanteren bij het schrijven van de reviews. High-art termen impliceren deskundigheid en contextuele kennis bij de schrijver. Er moet hierbij gedacht worden aan termen als: meesterlijk, geniaal, briljant, puur(heid), esthetisch/ esthethiek, allure, stilistisch, 'suspension of logic', aesthetisch, gracieus en dergelijken. Hierbij moet de kanttekening geschetst worden dat het draait om een directe connectie met kunst. De termen moeten dus wel worden onderbouwd, anders kunnen ze niet worden meegerekend binnen dezelfde variabele. De onderbouwing hiervan kan bijvoorbeeld gebeuren door het gebruik van één, of meerdere, van bovenstaande variabelen.

(10) Originaliteit/ innovatie:

Behalve verwijzingen naar complexe achterliggende gedachten en symboliek, kan volgens Van Venrooij en Schmutz (2006) ook verwezen worden naar originaliteit en/of innovatie als peiler(s) van een esthetisch waardeoordeel. Hieronder vallen dan ook alle verwijzingen, binnen een filmrecensie, naar iets dat nieuw of innovatief is voor een bepaalde stroming of een bepaald genre. Natuurlijk kunnen hier ook synoniemen voor worden ingevuld, zoals: onderscheidend of vernieuwend. Evenals bij de 'merit in failure' techniek van Baumann (2001), kan hier ook precies het omgekeerde gebruikt worden. Zo kan een film ook een slecht waardeoordeel verdienen vanwege gebrek aan originaliteit en/of innovatie. Laatstgenoemde valt dan onder dezelfde variabele.

(11) Complexiteit/ ambiguïteit:

Complexiteit is een variabele die Bourdieu (1984) in combinatie brengt met pure esthetiek en de esthetische dispositie. Pure esthethiek staat immers tegenover populaire cultuur en entertainment als vormen van 'makkelijk' vermaak. Complexiteit op zich is dus een referentie aan een product als kunstvorm. Dit aangezien er een 'moeilijke' benaderingswijze voor benodigd is. Binnen recensies vallen alle verwijzingen naar film als complex product dan ook onder deze variabele. Ook hier geldt dat tegenovergestelde benaderingen onder dezelfde

techniek te rangschikken zijn. Verwijzingen via woorden als; makkelijk, simpel en oppervlakkig worden dus ook onder deze variabele meegerekend (Van Venrooij en Schmutz, 2006). Ambigüiteit wordt daarnaast ook onder dezelfde variabele gerekend. Wanneer een product een dubbelzinnige (symbolische/semantieke) lading dekt, en hier over geschreven wordt, kan dit gerekend worden als een kunstkritische benadering.

(12) Serieusheid/ intelligent:

Deze variabele sluit grotendeels aan bij variabele (10). De mate van serieusheid van het product staat in verband met de complexiteit van het product en de manier waarop het benaderd dient te worden. Wanneer een film intelligent in elkaar zit, betekent dit vaak dat de volledige plot voor de kijker niet direct duidelijk is, of dat er slim met 'productionele valkuilen' is omgegaan (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2006). In het geval van de CBA schuilen deze valkuilen veelal in het al dan niet exact 'kopieëren' van het originele bronmateriaal. Wanneer binnen een recensie dan ook verwezen wordt naar intelligente oplossingen, zoals het opvullen van karaktereigenschappen, of een verwijzing naar de koppeling tussen verschillende comics uit dezelfde serie, valt dit dan ook onder dezelfde variabele.

(13) De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk:

De tijdloosheid van een product wordt bepaald door de esthetische waarden die zo'n product in zich draagt (Bourdieu, 1984). Wanneer een product 'de tand des tijds' zal doorstaan, houdt dit in dat een product van dergelijke kwaliteit is, dat men het generaties later nog altijd een bewonderingswaardig product zal vinden. Tijdloosheid slaat terug op de gedachte van autonomieit als enige vorm voor pure kunst, in tegenstelling tot de sensationele en directe vorm van 'het populaire'. Wanneer in een recensie dus verwezen wordt naar de tijdloosheid (of juist het gebrek aan) van een product, valt dit binnen het kunstkritisch discours, onder deze variabele (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2006).

(14) Subtiliteit/ geloofwaardigheid:

Binnen deze variabele draait het niet om de subtiliteit/ geloofwaardigheid van de plot, maar om de manier waarop het geheel in beeld is gebracht. Klopt alles cinematografisch? En is er rekening gehouden met bijvoorbeeld kloppende mis-en-scène elementen? (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003). Daarnaast gaat het om de geloofwaardigheid van de overdracht van beeld naar het publiek. In het geval van de CBA betreft dit het succesvol overbrengen van de comic, naar het grote scherm, naar het publiek. De vraag is, of dit succesvol gedaan is? Voor wat betreft de variabele, zijn alle verwijzingen richting de subtiliteit en geloofwaardigheid (in positieve als in negatieve zin) onder te brengen onder deze techniek. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan wordt gegeven op rottentomatoes.com, betreffende de film

The Shining (1980): 'Nicholson's performance, the score, and the pacing of this movie are just about perfect, but what stands out the most is the cinematography'.

(15) Focus op acteurs/ talent:

Volgens Bordwell en Thompson (2003) wordt film als kunststroom ook bestudeerd op de prestaties van de cast. Binnen deze variabele draait het dan ook om de acteerprestaties van hoofdrolspelers. In tegenstelling tot het populaire discours draait het niet om de acteurs zelf, zoals om hun priveleven, maar om de gerenommeerde acteerprestaties die zij neerzetten. Wanneer dus ingegaan wordt op een acteur, die een goede of slechte rol speelt, valt dit binnen deze variabele.

(16) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur:

Baumann (2001) spreekt over een techniek waarin kunst tegenover entertainment wordt geplaatst. Binnen deze variabelen ontleen ik het gedachtegoed dan ook daaraan. Het gaat erom dat er kritisch wordt gekeken naar films die zijn gemaakt vanuit puur commercieel oogpunt. Deze films zouden als 'onecht' worden beschouwd, aangezien ze niet zijn voortgekomen vanuit een autonome werking. Daarnaast kan er een negatieve houding bestaan jegens het Hollywood systeem (production code films), waarin een enorm budget niet garant staat voor een goede film. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is wat er is geschreven op [rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com), betreffende de film *Clash of the titans* (2010): 'Nowadays, my default expectation for a movie is that it will suck, and it seems that the big budget films (*Clash* had a production budget of \$125 million) are often the worst.' Er wordt uitgegaan van het principe dat grote budgetten geen ruimte over laten voor menselijke fantasie. 'Arthouse' films hebben veelal minder budget en laten meer aan de fantasie van de kijker over, wat bijdraagt aan de symbolische/ semantieke waarden in de film. Het grote budget, voor de zogenaamde blockbusters, laat het toe om alles te visualiseren, waardoor deze waarden juist verloren gaan.

4.5 Het populaire discours.

Binnen het populaire discours wordt gebruik gemaakt van compleet andere variabelen. Veelal betreffen het variabelen waarbij uitgegaan wordt van precies het tegenovergestelde van de variabelen van het kunstkritisch discours. Er heerst een grotere focus op directe sensatie en spektakel en de algemene entertainmentbeleving van de kijker. De volgende twaalf variabelen zijn opgenomen binnen dit discours:

(1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst:

Deze variabele doelt op het tegenovergestelde van variabele (15) uit het kunstkritisch discours. Het draait hier om een negatieve kijk vanuit de recensent op complexiteit en

seriusheid. Negatieve verwijzingen richting kunstzinnigheid in zijn algemeenheid vallen natuurlijk ook onder deze variabele (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2006).

(2) Gevoel van participatie:

Het gevoel van participatie draagt bij aan de immersieve ervaring die een kijker heeft/ krijgt door het bekijken van een film. Deze immersieve ervaring valt te vergelijken met 'het zichzelf verliezen' in het getoonde beeld, of 'de virtuele wereld' (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2003: 387). Veelal wordt het gevoel van participatie gekoppeld aan sensationisme en het grafisch realisme van het getoonde beeld (Vorderer, 2001: 255). Alleen hierdoor zou een kijker zich betrokken kunnen voelen bij wat hij/ zij ziet. Wanneer naar deze vorm van betrokkenheid wordt verwezen binnen een recensie, valt dit onder deze variabele.

(3) Emotionele authenticiteit:

Emotionele authenticiteit sluit aan bij de voorgaande variabele, betreffende het gevoel van participatie. Dit maal gaat het er echter niet om dat de kijker, of de schrijver van de recensie, 'zich verliest in het getoonde beeld', maar dat hij/zij emotioneel betrokken raakt bij het verhaal of de gespeelde rollen. Wanneer naar een film verwezen wordt als zijnde, bijvoorbeeld, een tranentrekker duidt dit op een dergelijke variabele. Bordwell en Thompson (2003) leggen dit uit als 'een drang naar het herkenbare'. Hiermee doelen zij op de emotionele status van de kijker en herkenbare patronen binnen de plot van een film. Vaak liggen deze patronen verscholen binnen sensationele gebeurtenissen, zoals het zinken van het schip in de film *Titanic* (1997). Hierbij moet de kanttekening geschetst worden dat het draait om authenticiteit. Hiermee bedoel ik dat opgewekte gevoelens alleen binnen deze variabele te plaatsen zijn, als er voor de kijker of schrijver sprake is van een herkenbare situatie, waardoor de gevoelens voor hem/haar echt zijn.

(4) Humor/ grappigheid:

Hieronder vallen verwijzingen naar de mate van grappigheid van een film of acteur. Hieronder kunnen termen als: hilarisch, grappig en lachwekkend geschaard worden. Volgens Vorderer (2001: 251) zijn entertainmentervaringen voornamelijk beschreven als aangenaam en vreugdevol. Dit geeft tevens de verklaring dat de vraag naar entertainment van het publiek van media vaak gericht is op een verlangen om vermaakt te worden (Vorderer, 2001: 251).

(5) Spanning/ suspens:

Hieronder vallen verwijzingen naar de mate van spanning die opgebouwd wordt binnen een film, of door een acteur. Hieronder kunnen termen als: eng, spannend, angstaanjagend en dergelijken, geschaard worden. Volgens Bosshart en Macconi (1998) schuilt de

entertainmentwaarde van spanning en suspens in de wetenschap dat het slechts een film is. De spanning is te vergelijken met het rijden in een achtbaan. Het gevoel van veiligheid, 'omdat het niet echt is', maakt dat spanning werkt als stimulator van vreugde. Daarnaast speelt het zogenaamde 'point of relief' hierbij een belangrijke rol. Dit houdt simpelweg in dat de spannende momenten eindigen wanneer de film eindigt. Het eindigen van de spanning is wordt dan beschreven als point of relief, aangezien het kan dienen als uitlaatklep voor stress.

(6) Ontroering:

Deze variabele lijkt sterk op variabele (3), betreffende de emotionele authenticiteit. Het grote verschil schuilt echter in de persoonlijke ervaring van de kijker en/of schrijver. Binnen deze variabele draait het namelijk om de beschrijving van emotionele of ontroerende situaties binnen de film, in tegenstelling tot de persoonlijke ervaring die hij/zij doormaakt door het kijken van een film. Wanneer bijvoorbeeld dus in een recensie geschreven wordt dat het zinken van het schip in de film *Titanic* (1997) een hartverscheurende scène betreft, valt het onder deze variabele. Dit in tegenstelling tot een beschrijving van zijn/haar persoonlijk referentiekader waarom deze scène hartverscheurend is. Dit zou impliceren dat het onder variabele (3) valt (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003).

(7) Ontwikkeling karakters:

Binnen deze variabele draait het om de focus op de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen de gespeelde rollen. Het gaat dus niet om de acteurs zelf, zoals in variabele (10), maar om 'de banden' die de acteurs met elkaar opbouwen binnen de film. Daarnaast wordt veel gelet op persoonlijke ontwikkeling en onderlinge strijd. Dergelijke variabelen worden veelal aangehaald om de gang van zaken in SOAPS en dergelijke te beschrijven. Het is een manier voor de kijker om het verhaal voor hem/haar zelf helder te krijgen, en uitleg te geven aan gebeurtenissen die getoond worden (Liebes & Katz, 1990)

(8) Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek:

Deze specifieke variabele gaat in op de rol van de recensent. Het draait hier om een beoordeling van de film, op basis van het potentiële publiek. De recensent geeft hier dus aan bij welk publiek de film aan zal slaan, en bij welk publiek niet. Het draait hier om een populaire techniek, aangezien er geen waardeoordeel gegeven wordt over de film zelf. Er wordt niet gestuurd in de smaak van het publiek, maar juist eerder andersom (Bielby et al., 2004). Voor wat betreft de CBA, is dit een belangrijke variabele. Veelal wordt verwezen naar het gegeven dat het publiek de film alleen zal kunnen waarderen wanneer men ook de comics/ novels gelezen heeft. Onder deze variabele worden dan ook alle referenties richting het potentiële publiek geschaard.

(9) Film als product:

In tegenstelling tot het kunstkritisch discours waarbij vorm centraal staat, staat bij het populaire discours het product zelf centraal. Het draait hierbij om de functie van de film als vermakelijk product. Het gaat er binnen deze variabele om dat verwijzingen worden gemaakt naar het potentieel (economisch) succes dat de film zal boeken, of geboekt heeft. Dit in tegenstelling tot het kunstkritisch discours waarbinnen (kunst) producten vrij dienen te zijn van economische voorwaarden en een autonoom bestaan dienen te hebben (Bourdieu, 1984). Verwijzingen naar de productiekosten en financieel gewin zijn binnen het kunstkritisch discours dan ook volledig overbodig. Binnen het populaire discours passen ze echter prima en vallen dan ook onder deze variabele (Wolfson, 2003).

(10) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s):

Daar waar de regisseur centraal staat als artiest, binnen het kunstkritisch discours, staat binnen het populaire discours de acteur centraal. Echter gaat het hier niet om talent, maar om de drang naar herkenbaarheid zoals beschreven door Bordwell en Thompson (2003) en Pisters (2002). Deze drang naar herkenbaarheid legt een causaal verband met het ontstaan van het sterrenstelsel (starsystem) in Hollywood. Dit sterrenstelsel kan, met betrekking tot de verschillende discoursen, lijnrecht tegenover de auteurtheorie van Truffaut (1954) gesteld worden. Binnen de recensies gaat het er in deze zin om dat er naar deze 'sterren' verwezen wordt.

(11) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel':

Spektakel is één van de grootste publiekstrekkingen van de cinema. De vroegere cinema, ook de cinema van het spektakel genoemd (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003), ging uit van één simpel principe: het imponeren van het publiek. Bij de vroegere cinema was dit simpeler dan tegenwoordig. Daar was het beeld van een aanrijdende trein genoeg om het publiek te shockeren. Tegenwoordig wordt gebruik gemaakt van baanbrekende 'special effects', om het 'hongerige' publiek te imponeren. Daarnaast wordt de laatste tijd veel gebruik gemaakt van 3D effecten om het publiek wederom naar de bioscopen te trekken en te laten genieten van 'het spektakel'. Wanneer in een recensie naar dergelijke elementen wordt verwezen, kan dat geschaard worden onder deze variabele.

(12) Connectie met populaire cultuur:

Binnen deze variabele wordt verwezen naar andere vormen van populair vermaak. Hierbij kan gedacht worden aan de soundtrack van de film(s), trailers of bioscoopposters. Het gaat hierbij dus expliciet niet om een connectie met een (andere) kunstvorm (Bielby et. al., 2004; Van Venrooij en Schmutz, 2006). Naast bovengenoemde vormen van populaire cultuur, kan ook verwezen worden naar televisieprogramma's, muziek en bijvoorbeeld games in het

algemeen.

(13) Entertainmentwaarde:

Deze variabele is gebaseerd op het gedachtegoed dat film als entertainmentproduct moet worden beschouwd, in tegenstelling tot het gedachtegoed van film als kunstvorm. Volgens Bielby et al. (2004), Van Venrooij en Schmutz (2006) en Bosshart en Macconi (1998), gaat het hier om de verwijzingen naar het vermakelijke, als: amusant, plezierig, leuk, aardig, mooi en dergelijken. Daarnaast kan hier ook het tegenovergestelde gelden. Dan wordt er uitgegaan van waardeoordelen als: saai, flauw en onplezierig. Daarnaast wordt er ook verwezen naar een bepaalde 'state of mind' (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998). Hiermee wordt bedoeld dat er een verwijzing wordt gemaakt naar het gevoel dat de film de kijker doet geven. Hierbij kan gedacht worden aan 'relaxing', rustgevend, hypnotiserend en dergelijken.

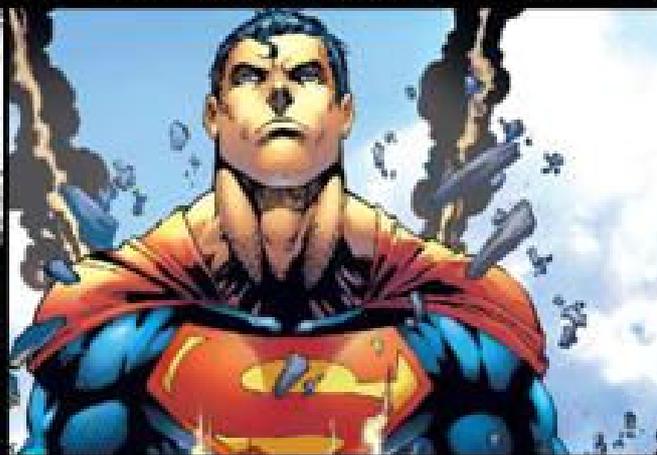
4.6 Operationalisering

Zoals eerder vermeld maak ik binnen mijn onderzoek gebruik van een kwantitatieve content analyse. De operationalisering van het geheel schuilt in een grondige data-analyse, die is opgezet binnen SPSS. Als ik deelvraag drie als voorbeeld neem, valt bovenstaande vrij simpel uit te leggen. Deelvraag drie betreft: D3: Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen het online- en offline discours? Om tot een beantwoording van deze vraag te komen, is eerst gekeken naar de cijfers die naar voren zijn gekomen uit de gegevensanalyse in SPSS, betreffende de tweehonderd geanalyseerde recensies. Via de gegevensanalyse is gekomen tot statistische verschillen, en overeenkomsten, in de verschillende discoursen. Deze gegevens worden als eerste deel van de beantwoording van de deelvraag gerekend. Dit wordt duidelijk gemaakt aan de hand van tabellen, waarin percentuele verschillen en overeenkomsten duidelijk worden gemaakt voor de lezer. Deze verschillen en overeenkomsten schuilen in de variabelen, zoals besproken in paragrafen 4.4 en 4.5. Zo kan er bijvoorbeeld 91% gebruik gemaakt zijn van variabele 8: Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek, binnen de user generated reviews, terwijl dit slechts voor 10% is gebeurd in de professionele recensies. Op deze manier wordt een duidelijk verschil voor de lezer zichtbaar.

Bovenstaand verschil beantwoordt echter slechts deels de gestelde vraag. Het antwoord wordt op deze manier namelijk nog niet theoretisch onderbouwd. Hiervoor dient de zogenaamde two tailed chi-square test, welke ook in SPSS uitgevoerd wordt. Aan de hand van deze test worden de twee onderzoeksgroepen naast elkaar geplaatst en vergeleken op overeenkomsten en verschillen, voor wat betreft de gebruikte discoursen. Daarnaast wordt aan de hand van deze test de mate van significantie (p), voor wat betreft de verschillen gemeten. Verdere uitleg, met betrekking tot de two tailed chi-square test, is te vinden in het resultaten hoofdstuk.

4.7 Validiteit van het onderzoek

Om de betrouwbaarheid en validiteit van mijn onderzoek te waarborgen heb ik getracht mijn theoretisch raamwerk zoveel mogelijk academisch in te bedden in voorgaande onderzoeken die raakvlakken vertoonden met mijn huidig onderzoek. Daarnaast heb ik een deel van de codering samen met iemand anders gedaan. Dit betroffen vijftien van de totaal tweehonderd recensies. Dit is gedaan om mijn coderingsschema te toetsen en om eventuele verbeteringen aan dit schema toe te voegen. Door de vijftien recensies apart van elkaar te coderen en vervolgens op zoek te gaan naar verschillen en overeenkomsten in deze codering is getracht mijn coderingsschema foutloos te maken. Wanneer er via verschillende variabelen werd gecodeerd (en dit veelvuldig gebeurde) duidde dit echter op een mogelijke fout in het schema. Deze fouten zijn dan ook uitgebreid besproken en behandeld, om uiteindelijk tot het coderingsschema te komen dat is gebruikt binnen dit onderzoek.



D1: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de online user generated reviews van de CBA?

D2: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de offline krantenrecensies van de CBA?

D3: Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

D4: Wat zijn de verschillen tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

Hoofdstuk 5. Resultaten

In de voorgaande hoofdstukken heb ik de probleemstelling uiteengezet, de concepten via het theoretisch kader uitgelegd, de casestudy besproken en de methode uitgelegd. Binnen dit vijfde hoofdstuk worden de resultaten per deelvraag gepresenteerd. Dit doe ik via tabellen, waarin de verschillende criteria (variabelen) gepresenteerd worden in percentages. Daarnaast worden resultaten gepresenteerd die aan de hand van de zogeheten Two tailed chi Square tests naar voren zijn gekomen. Binnen de eerste twee deelvragen ligt de focus op het gebruik van de verschillende discours van zowel de online- als de offline reviews. Hierbij is gebruik gemaakt van frequentietabellen. Dit houdt in dat er simpelweg gemeten is hoe vaak de variabelen voorkomen in de verschillende reviews. Dit wordt per discours gemeten en per groep (online of offline) gepresenteerd waardoor duidelijke verschillen naar voren treden en antwoord gegeven kan worden op de door mij gestelde vragen.

5.1 beantwoording deelvraag 1

De eerste deelvraag die behandeld wordt binnen dit hoofdstuk betreft de volgende vraagstelling:

D1: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de online user generated reviews van de CBA?

Het kunstkritisch discours bestaat uit een totaal van zestien verschillende variabelen en het populair discours bestaat uit een totaal van dertien verschillende variabelen. Om het geheel zo overzichtelijk mogelijk te maken worden een aantal van de variabelen samengevoegd in de hieronder getoonde tabellen. Allereerst zal gekeken worden naar de user generated reviews waarbij eerst de frequenties van de variabelen van het kunstkritisch discours zijn gemeten. De eerste vier variabelen zijn: (1) Positief/ negatief commentaar, (2) Regisseur is benoemd, (3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs en (4) Vergelijking tussen films. De resultaten van deze vier variabelen zijn terug te vinden in figuur (4):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Positief/ negatief commentaar	34 %	66 %
Regisseur is benoemd	46 %	54 %
Vergelijking tussen regisseurs	5 %	95 %
Vergelijking tussen films	43 %	57 %

Figuur (4): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

In figuur (4) is duidelijk te zien hoe vaak de variabelen gebruikt zijn binnen de honderd onderzochte online recensies. De benoeming van de regisseur en de vergelijking met andere films, variabelen die beide getuigen van contextuele kennis, worden respectievelijk het meest gebruikt. Aangezien er onderzoek is gedaan aan de hand van honderd recensies, zijn de percentages ook direct de precieze aantallen. De vergelijking tussen regisseurs (5 %) is dus ook slechts vijf maal voorgekomen.

De volgende vier variabelen die zijn gemeten vanuit het kunstkritisch discours betreffen: (1) Interpretatie van de film, (2) Benoeming van de maatschappelijk context, (3) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd en (4) Connectie met hoge kunst. De resultaten, betreffende de frequenties van de gemeten variabelen zijn hieronder te zien in figuur (5):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Interpretatie van de film	27 %	73 %
Benoeming maatschappelijke context	17 %	83 %
Context van de CBA wordt benoemd	32 %	68 %
Connectie met hoge kunst	10 %	90 %

Figuur (5): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Wat opvalt aan de meting van deze vier variabelen is dat ze beduidend minder vaak voorkomen dan de voorgaande vier. Interpretatie van de film is één van de belangrijkste variabelen binnen het kunstkritisch discours en wordt slechts 27 maal gebruikt binnen de user generated reviews. Daarnaast wordt er slechts tien keer verwezen naar film als artistiek product, waarvan in een recensie, geschreven door gebruiker: Zardoz74_2000, betreffende de film *Sin City* (2005), een goed voorbeeld wordt gegeven: *"With Hellboy, Guillermo Del Toro lovingly recreated panels from artist/creator Mike Mignola's comic book stories and brought them to vibrant life, setting a new benchmark for adaptations that respect their source material. With Sin City, however, co-directors Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller have done more than just recreate the brutal chiaroscuro of Miller's stark post-modern noir artwork."*

Natuurlijk verloopt de benoeming van kunst via specifieke conventies en methoden en kan er moeilijk verwacht worden dat de ongeschoolde recenent hiervan gebruik zal

maken, echter lijkt slechts 10% een erg laag aantal. Baumann (2002) die een verandering in de beschrijving van film zag vanaf de jaren zestig van de vorige eeuw, lijkt voor wat betreft deze variabele dan ook gelijk te krijgen dat de professionele critici het discours bepalen en 'het gewone volk' dit discours slechts kan volgen.

Naast bovengenoemde acht variabelen zijn ook de frequenties van de volgende vier variabelen gemeten vanuit het kunstkritisch discours. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) Het gebruik van high-art termen, (2) Originaliteit/innovatie, (3) Complexiteit/ambigüiteit en (4) Seriusheid/intelligent. De resultaten van deze vier variabelen zijn hieronder terug te vinden in figuur (6):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Het gebruik van high-art termen	36 %	64 %
Originaliteit/innovatie	29 %	71 %
Complexiteit/ambigüiteit	43 %	57 %
Seriusheid/intelligent	24 %	76 %

Figuur (6): Variabelen 9 t/m 12

Zoals in het voorgaande hoofdstuk uitgelegd staat, zijn alle vier de bovenstaande variabelen bepalend voor de vorming van het kunstkritisch discours op zich. Het zijn (onder andere) deze variabelen die de complexe benadering van kunst uitleggen en onderbouwen. Wanneer we deze vier variabelen, plus de voorgaande acht nogmaals grondig bekijken, valt het echter op dat tot nog toe geen van de variabelen boven de 50% uitstijgen. Dit is opvallend aangezien de onderzoeken van bijvoorbeeld Tancer (2009) en Duan & Whinston (2008) aantonen dat de UGR's een steeds prominentere rol beginnen te vervullen. De complexe benadering die de beoordeling van een artistiek product vereist, is echter nog niet volledig terug te vinden. Dit verandert echter wanneer we in onderstaand figuur de resultaten voor de laatste vier variabelen vanuit het kunstkritisch discours bekijken. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk, (2) Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid, (3) Focus op acteurs/talent en (4) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk	4 %	96 %
Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid	61 %	39 %
Focus op acteurs/talent	67 %	33 %
Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur	5 %	95 %

Figuur (7): Variabelen 13 t/m 16

De twee meest opvallende resultaten, betreffende de laatste vier variabelen, zijn natuurlijk die van subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid en de focus op acteurs/talent. Dit zijn de enige twee variabelen die vanuit het kunstkritisch discours komen, die vaker zijn gebruikt dan vijftig maal in de user generated reviews (respectievelijk 61 en 67 keer gebruikt). De mogelijke verklaring hiervan schuilt wellicht in het gegeven dat deze twee variabelen het meest dichtbij het 'ervaren van film' komen. Subtiliteit en geloofwaardigheid gaan grotendeels over de authenticiteit van het getoonde beeld en de focus op het talent van een acteur gaat om de geloofwaardigheid van zijn/haar prestatie. Voor wat betreft deze variabele is een goed voorbeeld aan te halen aan de hand van een recensie, geschreven door gebruiker: samseescinema, betreffende de film *V for Vendetta* (2005), waarin staat: "*Natalie Portman may have stolen the tabloid exposure with her shiny shaved head, but Hugo Weaving is the masked performance that steals the show*".

Beide variabelen spelen dus in op de immersieve functie van film (participatie), maar liggen desalniettemin besloten in het kunstkritisch discours vanwege specifieke aspecten waarop gelet wordt.

Al met al wordt 483 maal beroep gedaan op variabelen vanuit het kunstkritisch discours, binnen de user generated reviews geplaatst op imdb.com. Om antwoord te kunnen geven op mijn eerste deelvraag, zal echter ook nog gekeken moeten worden naar de frequenties betreffende het populaire discours gebruikt in deze zelfde online recensies. Ook in de resultaten betreffende dit discours zullen sommige variabelen binnen de tabellen bij elkaar worden gevoegd, om het geheel zo overzichtelijk mogelijk te maken.

De eerste vier variabelen, vanuit het populaire discours, die besproken worden zijn: (1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst, (2) Gevoel van participatie, (3) Emotionele authenticiteit en (4) Humor/grappigheid. De resultaten, betreffende de frequenties, zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (8):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Negatieve kijk ten opzichte van hoge kunst	1 %	99 %
Gevoel van participatie	23 %	77 %
Emotionele authenticiteit	6 %	94 %
Humor/grappigheid	27 %	73 %

Figuur (8): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

Het meest opvallende percentage in bovenstaande tabel is wellicht dat van de negatieve kijk op hoge kunst. Dit betreft slechts 1%, wat inhoudt dat het slechts binnen één enkele review gebruikt is. Dit terwijl er ook nauwelijks gebruik is gemaakt van een negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur (een variabele vanuit het kunstkritisch discours). Hiervan werd slechts in vijf

recensies gebruik gemaakt. Een negatieve of positieve kijk op populaire cultuur en/of hoge kunst wordt dus bijna niet verstrekt in de user generated reviews. Daarnaast is het opvallend dat ook voor de vier bovenstaande variabelen geldt, dat geen van allen ook maar in de buurt komt van 50%. De volgende vier criteria brengen daar weinig verandering in, hoewel ze wel vaker gebruikt worden dan de voorgaande vier. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) Spanning/suspens, (2) Ontroering, (3) Ontwikkeling karakters en (4) De voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek. Ook hiervoor geldt dat de resultaten, betreffende de frequenties, hieronder te vinden zijn in figuur (9):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Spanning/suspens	23 %	77 %
Ontroering	18 %	82 %
Ontwikkeling karakters	21 %	79 %
Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek	32 %	68 %

Figuur (9): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Ook voor deze variabelen geldt dus dat ze niet schrikbarend veel gebruikt zijn. Alleen de voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek stijgt nu boven het gemiddelde uit. De rest van de variabelen wordt echter, in tegenstelling tot mijn hypothesen, niet vaker gebruikt dan de criteria uit het kunstkritisch discours. Binnen de laatste vijf criteria verandert dit echter. Ook hiervoor geldt dat de frequenties in een tabel worden weergegeven. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) Film als product, (2) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s), (3) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel', (4) Connectie met populaire cultuur en (5) Entertainmentwaarde. De desbetreffende resultaten zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (10):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Film als product	7 %	93 %
Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s)	7 %	93 %
Focus op elementen van spektakel	49 %	51 %
Connectie met populaire cultuur	35 %	65 %
Entertainmentwaarde	84 %	16 %

Figuur (10): Variabelen 9 t/m 13

Het meest opvallende resultaat in bovenstaande tabel komt natuurlijk voort uit de laatste variabele: de entertainmentwaarde. Hier is maar liefst 84 maal gebruik van gemaakt binnen

het totaal van de 100 online recensies. Daarnaast bekleedt de focus op elementen van 'spektakel' de tweede plaats met 49%. Deze twee variabelen zijn echter de enige twee variabelen die veelvuldig gebruikt zijn binnen de UGR's. Van de criteria binnen het populaire discours is in totaal 333 maal gebruik gemaakt.

De 333 maal dat er gebruik is gemaakt van populaire variabelen verliest het dus van de 483 maal dat er gebruik is gemaakt van kunstkritische criteria. Percentueel gezien betekent dit dat het totaal van 100% wordt opgevuld door 483 kunstkritische variabelen + 333 populaire criteria = 816 totaal. In figuur (11) hieronder is dit wellicht duidelijker weergegeven.

Discours	Aantal gebruikte variabelen	Percentages
Kunstkritisch discours	483 maal	59,2 %
Populair discours	333 maal	40,8 %

Figuur (11): Resultaten

Om een antwoord te geven op de door mij gestelde deelvraag kan dan ook gesteld worden dat de user generated reviews overwegend gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours. De variabelen verhouden zich ongeveer in een 6/4 verhouding (van de 10 gebruikte variabelen zijn er ongeveer 6 afkomstig uit het kunstkritisch discours) ten opzichte van elkaar. Het is echter niet zo dat de twee verschillende discoursen in sterk contrast staan. Er wordt van beide discoursen redelijk veel gebruik gemaakt. In het geval van de professionele recensies liggen deze verhoudingen veel verder uit elkaar, zoals te zien is in de komende paragraaf.

5.2 Beantwoording deelvraag 2

Binnen deze tweede paragraaf zal een antwoord gegeven worden op de tweede door mij gestelde deelvraag, die als volgt luidt:

D2: Van welk discours wordt er gebruik gemaakt in de offline krantenrecensies van de CBA?

Om tot een antwoord te komen betreffende bovenstaande vraag, is van dezelfde methode gebruik gemaakt als bij deelvraag één. Ook hier zijn beide discours gemeten op de frequenties van de gebruikte variabelen. Ook hier wordt gebruik gemaakt van overzichtelijke tabellen om het geheel te verduidelijken, waarbij sommige variabelen bij elkaar zijn gevoegd. De eerste vier variabelen die besproken worden zijn, evenals bij de user generated reviews: (1) Positief/negatief commentaar, (2) Regisseur is benoemd, (3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs en (4) Vergelijking tussen films. De resultaten van deze vier variabelen zijn terug te vinden in figuur (12).

Binnen onderstaand figuur wordt direct duidelijk dat de verhoudingen binnen de professionele recensies anders liggen dan bij de UGR's. Direct stijgen drie van de vier

variabelen uit boven de 50%. Zelfs de vergelijking tussen regisseurs, die zwak afsteekt tegenover de rest met slechts 17%, blijkt twaalf maal meer gebruikt te zijn bij de professionele critici, dan binnen de UGR's.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Positief/ negatief commentaar	76 %	24 %
Regisseur is benoemd	88 %	12 %
Vergelijking tussen regisseurs	17 %	83 %
Vergelijking tussen films	72 %	28 %

Figuur (12): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

De benoeming van de regisseur is met 88% de meest gebruikte variabele binnen het complete onderzoek. Vaak werd de regisseur door de critici benoemd als de verantwoordelijke voor de film (de artistieke leider). Hieruit blijkt een andere benadering dan wanneer de regisseur niet wordt benoemd. Een vergelijking tussen films lijkt hierbij dan ook haast onvermijdelijk, aangezien deze vergelijking het werk van de regisseur in een bepaalde context plaats. Met 72% lijkt deze variabele dan ook goed vertegenwoordigd.

Daarnaast is het de 'merit in failure' techniek, zoals besproken door Baumann (2001), die veel terug te vinden is in de professionele recensies. Vaak werden bejubelde films nog licht bekritiseerd of werden goede aspecten uit redelijke slechte films nog even belicht. Zoals dat bijvoorbeeld gebeurt in een recensie betreffende de film *The Dark Knight* (2008), geschreven door Stephen Hunter voor de Washington Post, welke zei: "The performance is also the most interesting thing in the film, and when the Joker is absent, "The Dark Knight" loses most of its energy and dynamism and becomes nothing but a pretty-boy face-off between Christian Bale and Aaron Eckhart." In bovenstaand citaat wordt direct duidelijk gemaakt dat de rol van 'the Joker', gespeeld door Heath Ledger, het meest interessante aspect van de film is. Zonder hem is de film niets meer dan een simpele actiefilm, aldus Stephen Hunter.

Ook voor wat betreft de volgende vier onderzochte variabelen zijn interessante gegevens naar voren gekomen. Het zijn de volgende variabelen die zijn gemeten vanuit het kunstkritisch discours: (1) Interpretatie van de film, (2) Benoeming van de maatschappelijke context, (3) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd en (4) Connectie met hoge kunst. De resultaten zijn op de volgende pagina terug te vinden in figuur (13).

Het meest opvallende resultaat, uit bovenstaande tabel, betreft natuurlijk dat van de context van de CBA, oftewel de bespreking van het originele werk (het bronmateriaal) waarop de gerecenseerde film gebaseerd is. Met respectievelijk 79% is dit één van de meest gebruikte variabelen onder de professionele critici.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Interpretatie van de film	39 %	61 %
Benoeming maatschappelijke context	17 %	83 %
Context van de CBA wordt benoemd	79 %	21 %
Connectie met hoge kunst	19 %	81 %

Figuur (13): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Wat dan direct opvalt is dat de variabele van de bespreking van de maatschappelijke context, daarentegen, niet veel gebruikt wordt. Een connectie met hoge kunst wordt veelal ook niet gemaakt/gezien. De verwijzingen naar het bronmateriaal maakt dat, volgens de critici zelf, vaak onmogelijk. Alleen films als *Sin City* (2005) en *American Splendor* (2003) worden veelal bestempeld als kunst of kunstzinnige projecten, vanwege stijlelementen, cinematografie of een complexe verhaal-/plotlijn. Daarnaast is het volgens de critici zo dat het bronmateriaal, waar deze films op gebaseerd zijn, meer weghebben van literaire werken dan van simpele stripboeken. Dit maakt de connectie met hoge kunst meer zichtbaar (Wolfson, 2003). De interpretatie van sommige films daarentegen, komt wel redelijk vaak voor. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is de bespreking van de film *Iron Man* (2008), door Mick LaSalle in de *San Francisco Chronicle*, die zei: *"There's an element of social commentary at work in this. You want to know how irrational the world is? It's so irrational that the most rational response a concerned genius can come up with is to perfect an iron suit and get into fantastic sky battles"*

De interpretatie van een film maakt dat het gerecenseerde product serieus genomen wordt. Alleen wanneer een recensent een product serieus neemt, is men bereid om dieperliggende betekenissen te ontrafelen en om de artistieke zijde van een product te 'ontmaskeren'. Er wordt dan wel geen directe relatie met hoge kunst vastgesteld, wel wordt het product benaderd vanuit een kunstzinnig perspectief waarin het boek niet alleen op zijn kaff wordt beoordeeld. Naast bovengenoemde variabelen zijn ook de volgende vier criteria binnen de professionele recensies gemeten. Deze criteria betreffen: (1) Het gebruik van high-art termen, (2) Originaliteit/innovatie, (3) Complexiteit/ambigüiteit en (4) Seriusheid/intelligent. De resultaten van deze vier variabelen zijn op de volgende pagina terug te vinden in figuur (14).

Binnen de resultaten, die betrekking hebben op de beantwoording van deelvragen 1 en 2, wordt nog geen vergelijking getrokken tussen de professionele recensies en de UGR's. Desalniettemin is er wel al een sterk contrast zichtbaar. Bovengenoemde variabelen, die allen een belangrijke rol spelen binnen het kunstkritisch discours, zijn allemaal vaker aangehaald door de professionelen, dan door het 'gewone volk'.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Het gebruik van high-art termen	43 %	57 %
Originaliteit/innovatie	41 %	59 %
Complexiteit/ambigüiteit	72 %	28 %
Seriusheid/intelligent	45 %	55 %

Figuur (14): Variabelen 9 t/m 12

Vooraf de variabele met betrekking tot de complexiteit/ambigüiteit van de film is veel gebruikt. Één van de objectieve beginselen van kunst is de complexe benadering die het vereist. Daarmee kunnen kunstvormen ook ingedeeld worden in classificeringen als 'hoog' of 'laag'. Het gegeven dat de complexiteit (of juist de makkelijkheid) van de films dus door de recensenten op een dergelijke manier wordt benadrukt, maakt dus dat de films zijn beoordeeld op artistieke waarde(n). Daarnaast is er veel gebruik gemaakt van specifieke high-art termen, zoals: 'pure cinema', 'escapism', 'suspension of logic', 'aesthetical value' en vele andere.

De laatste vier variabelen, vanuit het kunstkritisch discours, die hier behandeld worden zijn: (1) De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk, (2) Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid, (3) Focus op acteurs/talent en (4) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk	4 %	96 %
Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid	86 %	14 %
Focus op acteurs/talent	68 %	32 %
Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur	2 %	98 %

Figuur (15): Variabelen 13 t/m 16

De twee meest opvallende resultaten uit bovenstaande tabel, zijn wellicht de variabelen: subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid en negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur. De eerstgenoemde variabele is vooral interessant omdat dit de op één na meest gebruikte variabele is binnen het complete onderzoek, voor wat betreft de professionele recensies. Daarnaast is het interessant omdat het gebruik van deze variabele vooral inspeelde op de mis-en-scène, daar waar het bij de UGR's voornamelijk betrekking had op de authenticiteit van het getoonde beeld. De negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur komt nauwelijks aan bod. Dit heeft wellicht te maken met de context van het originele bronmateriaal. Comic books (of stripboeken en graphic novels) zijn van oorsprong producten die circuleerden binnen de populaire cultuur (zie hoofdstuk 2). Wanneer een recensie geschreven wordt over een product, waarvan de basis in de populaire cultuur ligt, wordt het allicht lastig om de context van het bronmateriaal

plus de film zelf om deze reden te bekritisieren. De tijdloosheid van het werk werd daarnaast ook niet vaak besproken. Dit gebeurde echter wel bij de eerder genoemde films als *Sin City* (2005) en *American Splendor* (2003), die over het algemeen ook meer werden beschouwd als artistieke producten.

Al met al is in totaal 768 maal gebruik gemaakt van criteria, afkomstig vanuit het kunstkritisch discours binnen de professionele recensies. Zoals in de vorige paragraaf ook duidelijk naar voren komt, zal nu eerst gekeken worden naar het gebruik van criteria uit het populaire discours om antwoord te kunnen geven op de tweede deelvraag. De eerste vier variabelen die besproken worden zijn: (1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst, (2) Gevoel van participatie, (3) Emotionele authenticiteit en (4) Humor/grappigheid. De resultaten, betreffende deze frequenties zijn hieronder te vinden in figuur (16). Het eerste gegeven dat natuurlijk opvalt is dat geen van de variabelen veel gebruikt wordt. De negatieve kijk op hoge kunst wordt zelfs geen enkele keer gebruikt. Dit is vrij logisch te verklaren, kijkende naar de resultaten vanuit het kunstkritisch discours. Hierin wordt duidelijk dat de critici de gerecenseerde producten vanuit een artistieke wijze beschrijven en dus logischerwijs geen negatieve kijk op hoge kunst koesteren. Daarnaast wordt er duidelijk niets beschreven vanuit een bepaald gevoel.

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Negatieve kijk ten opzichte van hoge kunst	0 %	100 %
Gevoel van participatie	14 %	86 %
Emotionele authenticiteit	1 %	99 %
Humor/grappigheid	18 %	82 %

Figuur (16): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

Het gegeven dat de emotionele authenticiteit dus maar éénmalig gebruikt wordt, kan ook vanuit de resultaten van het kunstkritisch discours beschreven worden.

De volgende vier criteria brengen weinig verandering. Dit terwijl ze wel ietwat vaker gebruikt worden dan de voorgaande vier. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) Spanning/suspens, (2) Ontroering, (3) Ontwikkeling karakters en (4) De voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek. Ook hiervoor geldt dat de resultaten, betreffende de frequenties, op de volgende pagina te vinden zijn in figuur (17).

Slechts de voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek wordt relatief vaak gebruikt, in verhouding met de andere variabelen uit bovenstaande tabel. Deze voorspelling heeft voornamelijk betrekking op de 'fans' van het bronmateriaal waarop de besproken films gebaseerd zijn. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan wordt gegeven aan de hand van een recensie over de film *Watchmen* (2009), geschreven door Tom Long voor Detroit News, waarin hij zegt: "Fanboys, geeks and fantasy hounds may well love it; the rest of humanity could find it an

incomprehensible experiment in hard, R-rated eye candy."

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Spanning/suspens	18 %	82 %
Ontroering	7 %	93 %
Ontwikkeling karakters	3 %	97 %
Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek	25 %	75 %

Figuur (17): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Naast de voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek wordt alleen de variabele van spanning/suspens een aantal maal gebruikt (18 keer in de 100 besproken recensies). Een duidelijk voorbeeld hiervan komt uit de recensie van de film *30 days of night* (2007), geschreven door Amy Biancolli voor de Houston Chronicle, waarin zij schrijft: *"But even as stage blood flows like water, this wicked-mean vampire thriller pushes ahead with effective characters, a fantastic visual schema and a terrifying plot."* Opvallend aan bovenstaand citaat is het gegeven dat de variabele van spanning/suspens pas aan het eind van de zin gebruikt wordt. In het begin van de zin wordt duidelijk verwezen naar goede en slechte punten binnen de film die wijzen op het gebruik van de zogenaamde 'merit in failure' techniek, zoals besproken door Baumann (2001). De spanning/suspens variabele wordt dus alleen gebruikt om positief/negatief commentaar kracht bij te staan, in plaats van dat het gebruikt wordt als op zichzelfstaande variabele.

De laatste vijf variabelen, vanuit het populaire discours, die besproken zullen worden brengen ietwat verandering in het tot nog toe geschetste beeld over de professionele critici en het gebruik van het populaire discours. Deze variabelen betreffen: (1) Film als product, (2) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s), (3) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel', (4) Connectie met populaire cultuur en (5) Entertainmentwaarde. De desbetreffende resultaten zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (18):

Variabele	Aantal keer voorgekomen in reviews	Aantal keer niet voorgekomen in reviews
Film als product	7 %	93 %
Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s)	7 %	93 %
Focus op elementen van spektakel	49 %	51 %
Connectie met populaire cultuur	35 %	65 %
Entertainmentwaarde	84 %	16 %

Figuur (18): Variabelen 9 t/m 13

De twee meest opvallende resultaten zijn natuurlijk die van de focus op elementen van 'spektakel' en de entertainmentwaarde (met respectievelijk 49% en 84%). Het gegeven dat de meeste comic book adaptations een basis hebben in stripboeken die veelal leunen op spektakel bieden hier dan ook een vrij logische verklaring voor. Daarnaast kunnen de meeste objectieve waardeoordelen van de critici ook meegerekend worden onder de variabele: entertainmentwaarde. Deze beoordeling is veelal niet gestoeld op de persoonlijke ervaring, maar geeft wel degelijk inzicht in het gegeven of de criticus de film heeft ervaren als 'entertaining' of juist niet.

Al met al kan gesteld worden dat door de professionele critici veel meer gebruik is gemaakt van het kunstkritisch discours, ten opzichte van het populaire discours. Een simpele berekening maakt dat ongeveer 8 op de 10 gebruikte variabelen afkomstig is van het eerstgenoemde discours (er zijn 768 kunstkritische variabelen gebruikt, tegenover 220 populaire variabelen). In onderstaand figuur (19) staat dit duidelijker weergegeven:

Discours	Aantal gebruikte variabelen	Percentages
Kunstkritisch discours	768 maal	77,7 %
Populair discours	220 maal	22,3 %

Figuur (19): Resultaten

Om antwoord te geven op de door mij gestelde deelvraag, kan dan ook gesteld worden dat de professionele critici veelal gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours. Ten opzichte van de UGR's ligt dit percentage bij de critici dan ook vrij hoog. Hier staan de twee discoursen dan ook in vrij sterk contrast met elkaar, zoals dit ook in mijn hypothesen gesteld staat. De hypothese, betreffende het gebruikte discours van de professionele critici lijkt hiermee dan ook bevestigd.

In de komende twee paragrafen worden de user generated reviews en de professionele reviews met elkaar vergeleken op overeenkomsten en verschillen, voor wat betreft de gebruikte discoursen aan de hand van de zogeheten Two tailed Chi Square test.

5.3 Beantwoording deelvraag 3

Binnen voorgaande paragrafen zijn resultaten gepresenteerd die gericht zijn op de frequenties van de variabelen uit de twee verschillende discoursen, gebruikt binnen de UGR's en de professionele recensies. De derde deelvraag, die in deze paragraaf behandeld wordt, luidt echter als volgt:

D3: Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

Binnen de komende twee paragrafen ligt de focus dus juist op de vergelijking tussen het

gebruik van deze variabelen binnen diezelfde UGR's en professionele recensies. Dit is gedaan aan de hand van een zogeheten two tailed chi-square test. Hiermee wordt de significantie (p) van gevonden verschillen gemeten. In de tabellen wordt deze significantie weergegeven aan de hand van sterren. Hiermee geldt dat als p kleiner is dan 0,05 de significantie matig is. Hiervoor staat één ster. Dit ziet er als volgt uit: $p < 0,05$ (matig) *. De andere maten van significantie zien er dan als volgt uit: $p < 0,01$ (redelijk) **, $p < 0,001$ (sterk) ***, NS = niet significant. Binnen de door mij gestelde derde deelvraag wordt gevraagd naar de overeenkomsten tussen de online en offline reviews. Binnen deze paragraaf worden dus alleen de resultaten besproken waarbij het level van significantie NS: niet significant is, aangezien hier de verschillen tussen beide groepen niet groot (noemenswaardig) zijn. Wanneer de verschillen echter tegen het significante aanzitten, worden hier de waarden van gegeven (bijvoorbeeld $p = 0,07$).

Er zijn in totaal zestien variabelen waarbij duidelijke overeenkomsten te vinden zijn, voor wat betreft het level van significantie van de verschillen. Om de resultaten zo overzichtelijk mogelijk te houden worden deze gepresenteerd in groepen van vier variabelen per tabel. De eerste vier variabelen waarvan de resultaten gepresenteerd worden betreffen: (1) Interpretatie van de film, (2) Benoeming van de maatschappelijke context, (3) Connectie met hoge kunst en (4) Het gebruik van high-art termen. Die resultaten betreffende deze variabelen zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (20):

Figuur (20): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Verskil	Significantie
Interpretatie	27 maal	39 maal	12	$p = 0,07$
Maatschappelijke context	17 maal	17 maal	0	$p = ns$
Connectie hoge kunst	10 maal	19 maal	9	$p = 0,071$
Gebruik high-art termen	36 maal	43 maal	7	$p = ns$

* $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$; *** $p < 0,001$; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Zoals in bovenstaand figuur te zien is, zijn de verschillen bij de variabelen; interpretatie en de connectie met hoge kunst, bijna matig significant te noemen (bijna een verschil van $p < 0,05$). Met een gemiddeld verschil van respectievelijk 12 variabelen op 200 recensies en 9 variabelen op 200 recensies, betreft dit echter slechts nog altijd een relatief klein verschil. Wanneer dit onderzoek grootschaliger uitgevoerd wordt zullen de verschillen naar alle waarschijnlijkheid niet significant bevonden worden.

Het gegeven dat de variabele; maatschappelijk context, niet significant is bevonden is terugkijkend op het onderzoek niet vreemd. De meeste CBA's zijn gebaseerd op comics die zich afspelen in alternatieve realiteiten, waarbij dus geen verwijzing plaatsvindt naar onze huidige maatschappij. De films zijn dan ook veelal afspiegelingen van deze alternatieve

realiteit/ maatschappij, waardoor het voor de recensenten moeilijk wordt om een connectie tussen de maatschappelijke context en de film te schetsen. Het resultaat omtrent de variabele van het gebruik van high-art termen is echter redelijk opvallend te noemen. Volgens Baumann (2001, 2007) bepalen de professionele critici het kunstkritisch discours en kan de 'gewone man' dit discours volgen. In navolging van Baumann kan aan de hand van deze resultaten gesteld worden dat het gebruik van high-art termen 7 maal op de 200 recensies vaker voor komt bij de professionele recensies, dan bij de UGR's. De stelling van Baumann lijkt voor wat betreft dit onderzoek dan ook nog altijd op te gaan.

De volgende vier variabelen waarin duidelijke overeenkomsten naar voren komen zijn: (1) Originaliteit/innovatie, (2) De tijdloosheid van het besproken product, (3) Focus op acteurs/talent en (4) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur. De resultaten voor wat betreft bovengenoemde variabelen zijn hieronder te bezichtigen in figuur (21):

Figuur (21): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Verschil	Significantie
Originaliteit/innovatie	29 maal	41 maal	12	p = 0,075
Tijdloosheid van het besproken product	4 maal	4 maal	0	p = ns
Focus op acteurs/talent	67 maal	68 maal	1	p = ns
Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur	5 maal	2 maal	3	p = ns

*p < 0,05; **p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

De focus op acteurs/talent is één van de meest gebruikte variabelen over beide onderzoeksgroepen. Zowel in de UGR's als in de offline recensies wordt dieper ingegaan op de acteerprestaties van zowel de hoofdpersonages als de 'supporting cast'. Een opvallender resultaat is dat van de negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur. Deze variabele is drie maal meer gebruikt binnen de UGR's dan binnen de professionele recensies (respectievelijk 5 maal online en 2 maal offline). Dit terwijl er verwacht werd dat de UGR's zelf functioneerden binnen de populaire cultuur en er om deze reden dan ook weinig kritiek vanaf die hoek zou komen. Desalniettemin zijn de verschillen bij beide onderzoeksgroepen niet significant te noemen.

De originaliteit/innovatie als gebruikte variabele is ook redelijk opvallend. Dit omdat deze variabele redelijk tot zeer vergelijkbaar is met de variabelen: complexiteit/ambiguïteit en serieusheid/intelligent, die wel als significant verschillend zijn aangemerkt over de twee onderzochte groepen. Hierover is echter meer te lezen in de volgende paragraaf waarin de verschillen tussen de onderzoeksgroepen worden benadrukt. De volgende vier variabelen waarin juist de overeenkomsten worden benadrukt zijn: (1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst,

(2) Gevoel van participatie, (3) Humor/grappigheid en (4) Spanning/suspens. De resultaten van desbetreffende variabelen zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (22). De negatieve kijk op hoge kunst, is een variabele die eigenlijk helemaal niet gebruikt is. Één maal is deze slechts gebruikt om de variabele van de entertainmentervaring kracht bij te staan.

Figuur (22): Variabelen 9 t/m 12

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Vershil	Significantie
Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst	1 maal	0 maal	1	p = ns
Gevoel van participatie	23 maal	14 maal	9	p = ns
Humor/grappigheid	27 maal	23 maal	4	p = ns
Spanning/suspens	23 maal	18 maal	5	p = ns

*p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Dit gebeurt in een recensie betreffende de film *The Fantastic Four* (2005), geschreven door gebruiker: Drendoynk, die zei: *"Ten years later, a smile comes to my face when I hear about a movie being made about the superheroes I vaguely remember loving as a child. I don't read comic books. I could care less about the comic book accuracy. I just wanna see some guy burst into flames, fly, and say smart** comments."*. Verder zijn de andere drie variabelen, allen afkomstig vanuit het populaire discours, vrij evenredig verdeeld. Het gevoel van participatie, humor/grappigheid en spanning/suspens, zijn alledrie variabelen die inspelen op film als 'beleving'. Hieruit valt op te maken dat de professionele critici, voor wat betreft deze variabelen, evengoed hun 'gevoel' beschrijven als het 'gewone volk' in de online recensies.

De laatste vier variabelen waarbij overeenkomsten te vinden zijn, voor wat betreft de online- en offline recensies, betreffen de volgende: (1) De voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek, (2) Film als product, (3) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van acteur(s) en (4) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel'. De resultaten voor deze vier variabelen zijn hieronder te vinden in figuur (23):

Figuur (23): Variabelen 13 t/m 16

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Vershil	Significantie
Voorspellingreactie van het publiek	23 maal	18 maal	5	p = ns
Film als product	7 maal	5 maal	2	p = ns
Focus persoonlijk leven van de acteurs	7 maal	10 maal	3	p = ns
Focus op elementen van spektakel	49 maal	42 maal	7	p = ns

*p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Binnen het onderzoek valt het op dat de variabele: focus op het persoonlijk leven van acteur(s), anders wordt gebruikt dan van tevoren gedacht. Deze variabele is eigenlijk alleen gebruikt bij de films: *The Dark Knight* (2008) en *The Crow* (1994). Dit heeft voornamelijk te maken met het overlijden van twee hoofdrolspelers, tijdens en vlak na, de opnamen van de desbetreffende films. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan is een recensie geschreven door Amy Biancolli over de film *The Dark Knight* (2008) voor de *Houston Chronicle*, waarin zij schrijft: *“Heath Ledger died too young, leaving behind performances as faceted, brilliant and few as a handful of diamonds.”*. Naast dergelijke annotaties wordt de variabele slechts één andere keer gebruikt in een UGR over de film *Iron Man* (2008), geschreven door gebruiker David Ferguson, die zegt: *“I have long been an admirer of the talented Robert Downey, Jr (“Chaplin” and “Kiss Kiss Bang Bang”) and only wish he could keep it together in real life so he could work more often.”*.

Naast deze variabele bleek ook de variabele: film als product, volledig anders uit te pakken dan in eerste instantie verwacht. De benoeming van economische waarden die film mogelijk dragen, zijn verwijzingen die vallen binnen de populaire cultuur. Mijn verwachting hierover was dan ook dat dit criterium veel aangehaald zou worden door de schrijvers van de UGR's. Echter blijkt dit slechts zeven maal gedaan te zijn, tegenover de vijf maal dat het gebeurd is binnen de professionele recensies. De verschillen hierin zijn dan ook niet significant te noemen. Om die reden zijn de twee onderzoeksgroepen, voor wat betreft deze variabele, dan ook vergelijkbaar.

Om tot een beantwoording te komen van de door mij gestelde deelvraag, kan gesteld worden dat er in totaal 16 van de 29 gebruikte variabelen overeenkomen tussen de twee onderzoeksgroepen. Van deze 16 variabelen zijn er 8 die vallen binnen het populaire discours en 8 die vallen binnen het kunstkritisch discours. De overeenkomsten zijn dus gelijkwaardig verdeeld over beide discoursen. Het is echter zo, dat drie van de acht variabelen vanuit het kunstkritisch discours nagenoeg 'matig significant' te noemen zijn. Wanneer we deze aftrekken van het totaal van acht variabelen vanuit het kunstkritisch discours blijven er daar slechts vijf van over. Dit kan gedaan worden omdat het verschil tussen NS (niet significant) en $p < 0,05$ (matig significant) in deze gevallen vrijwel verwaarloosbaar zijn. Wanneer we dit in gedachten houden zien we dat de overduidelijke overeenkomsten anders verdeeld zijn. In dit geval betekent het dat er 13 van de 29 variabelen overeenkomen, voor wat betreft de beide onderzoeksgroepen. Hiervan vallen er 5 binnen het kunstkritisch discours en 8 binnen het populaire discours. In onderstaande tabel staat dit wellicht duidelijker beschreven:

Discours	Overeenkomsten	uitzonderingen	Totaal
Kunstkritisch discours	8 variabelen	3 variabelen	5 variabelen
Populair discours	8 variabelen	0 variabelen	8 variabelen

Figuur [24] Resultaten

Om tot een eenduidig antwoord te komen, betekent dit dus dat de voornaamste overeenkomsten te vinden zijn in het gebruik van het populaire discours. Hier zijn de verschillen het minst significant. De verschillen in het gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours zijn ietwat meer significant. Desalniettemin is de verdeling over beide discoursen evenredig verdeeld en kan er simpelweg gesteld worden dat 16 van de 29 variabelen overeenkomen. Dit houdt dus in dat de twee onderzoeksgroepen voor 55,2% overeenkomen, voor wat betreft het gebruik van de variabelen. Hiermee is het ook direct duidelijk dat de verschillen dan 44,8% zullen betreffen. Hiermee lijkt het dus dat er duidelijk meer overeenkomsten te vinden zijn dan verschillen. Echter is het zo dat de verschillen meer prominent aanwezig zijn (zoals ook te zien zal zijn aan de mate van significantie) dan de overeenkomsten, zoals besproken in deze paragraaf. De 13 overgebleven variabelen, die duiden op duidelijke verschillen in het gebruik van de discoursen, worden dan ook in de volgende paragraaf beschreven.

5.4 Beantwoording deelvraag 4

Binnen deze vierde en laatste paragraaf van mijn resultaten hoofdstuk worden de verschillen in de gebruikte discoursen van de onderzoeksgroepen weergegeven. Dit wordt gedaan aan de hand van de volgende deelvraag:

D4: Wat zijn de verschillen tussen de online- en offline recensies van de CBA?

Ook hier is dit gedaan aan de hand van een two tailed chi-square test, waarvan de resultaten in drie tabellen zijn weergegeven. Ook hier geldt: hoe kleiner de gevonden significantie (p), hoe groter de verschillen in de gebruikte discoursen. Een resultaat van $p < 0,001$ blijkt dus een sterk significantieniveau. Binnen de komende resultaten gelden ook twee kleine uitzonderingen, vergelijkbaar met de drie uitzonderingen van de vorige paragraaf, die later besproken zullen worden. De eerste vier variabelen die besproken worden betreffen de volgende: (1) Positief/negatief commentaar, (2) Regisseur is benoemd, (3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs en (4) Vergelijking tussen films. De resultaten betreffende deze vier variabelen zijn op de volgende pagina weergegeven in figuur (25).

Wat direct opvalt wanneer men kijkt naar de bovenstaande gegevens, is dat de verschillen beduidend groter zijn dan de overeenkomsten, zoals die besproken zijn in de voorgaande paragraaf. Drie van de vier gemeten variabelen zijn sterk significant, wat inhoudt dat er grote verschillen bestaan in het gebruik van de twee discoursen door de twee onderzoeksgroepen. Vooral het gebruik van de 'merit in failure' techniek, zoals besproken door Baumann (2001), plus de benoeming van de regisseur, zijn twee variabelen die veelvuldig gebruikt worden door de professionele critici. Beide variabelen zijn 42 maal minder gebruikt binnen de user generated reviews (respectievelijk 76 om 34 maal en 88 om 46 maal).

Figuur (25): Variabelen 1 t/m 4

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Verskil	Significantie
Positief/negatief commentaar	34 maal	76 maal	42	*** (p = 0,000)
Regisseur is benoemd	46 maal	88 maal	42	*** (p = 0,000)
Vergelijking regisseurs	5 maal	17 maal	12	** (p = 0,007)
Vergelijking films	43 maal	72 maal	29	*** (p = 0,000)

*p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Een vergelijking tussen regisseurs blijkt een criterium dat in beide onderzoeksgroepen niet veelvuldig wordt gebruikt (respectievelijk 5 maal binnen de UGR's en 17 maal in de offline recensies). Desalniettemin blijkt het verschil redelijk significant en zal bij uitgebreider onderzoek wellicht blijken dat het verschil meer neigt naar sterke significantie.

Bij de volgende vier variabelen zijn ook grote verschillen zichtbaar. Deze variabelen betreffen de volgende: (1) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd, (2) Complexiteit/ambiguïteit, (3) Seriusheid/intelligent en (4) Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid. De resultaten betreffende deze variabelen zijn hieronder weergegeven in figuur (26).

Evenals bij de vorige vier besproken resultaten, zijn hier de verschillen op zijn minst noemenswaardig. Wederom zijn drie van de vier variabelen sterk significant en dit maal zit de derde daar erg dichtbij (sterk significant is $p < 0,001$, serieus/intelligent is $p = 0,002$). Het gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours door de professionele critici is, voor wat betreft deze variabelen, dan ook vrij duidelijk te noemen. Het gebruik van de variabele subtiliteit/geloofwaardig is echter een punt dat door beide onderzoeksgroepen veelal anders wordt ingezet.

Figuur (26): Variabelen 5 t/m 8

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Verskil	Significantie
Context CBA	32 maal	79 maal	47	*** (p = 0,000)
Complexiteit/ambiguïteit	43 maal	72 maal	29	*** (p = 0,000)
Serieus/intelligent	24 maal	45 maal	21	** (p = 0,002)
Subtiliteit/geloofwaardigheid	61 maal	86 maal	25	*** (p = 0,000)

*p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

De professionele critici maakten vaak gebruik van dit criterium om een objectief waardeoordeel te vellen met betrekking tot de cinematografische status van de gerecenseerde film(s). Dit had veelal betrekking op de authenticiteit van bijvoorbeeld de décors, kostuums en dergelijke. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan wordt gegeven in een recensie van Desson Thomson over de film *Sin City* (2005), geschreven voor de Washington Post,

waarin hij zegt: *"Miller and Rodriguez have achieved the near-impossible: reproducing the pictorial reality of those comic book stories onto the screen. Visually, this has been done with digital enhancement, darkly perfected sets and masterful makeup. The performers look part-cartoon and part-human and thoroughly convincing."*

In tegenstelling tot de professionele recensies, wordt dezelfde variabele binnen de UGR's veel gebruikt om de geloofwaardigheid van bepaalde opnamen of elementen van 'spektakel' te benadrukken (of juist af te vlakken). Een goed voorbeeld hiervan komt uit een recensie betreffende de film *Spiderman* (2002), geschreven door gebruiker: tburke85, die zei: *"I like the fact they made the Goblin a split personality a side effect of the performance enhancers his character takes in the movie. His costume did look a little corny and it resembled something you'd see in an episode of Power Rangers or something but Dafoe makes for an imposing villain none the less."*

De variabele; complexiteit/ambigüiteit, wordt in beide onderzoeksgroepen voor dezelfde doeleinden gebruikt. Dit is opvallend te noemen, aangezien deze variabele verwijst naar de complexe benadering die artistieke producten vereisen. Deze benadering zou echter alleen zijn voorbehouden aan 'de hogere klassen', aangezien alleen zij de juiste opleiding zouden genieten, of uit het juiste sociale milieu komen (bourdieu, 1984). Het gegeven dat hieraan dus opvallend is, is dat het ook binnen de UGR's veelvuldig gebruikt wordt. Echter is het nog wel altijd zo dat ook hier de critici het discours bepalen en 'het gewone volk' dit discours kan gaan gebruiken, wat blijkt uit de sterke mate van significantie, gemeten bij deze variabele.

De laatste vijf variabelen, waarin verschillen zijn gemeten, zijn allen afkomstig vanuit het populaire discours. Deze variabelen betreffen de volgende: (1) Emotionele authenticiteit, (2) Ontroering, (3) Ontwikkeling karakters, (4) Connectie met populaire cultuur en (5) Entertainmentwaarde. De resultaten zijn op de volgende pagina te zien in figuur (27).

Het gegeven dat vooral opvalt aan de laatste vijf gemeten variabelen, is dat deze allemaal meer gebruikt worden binnen de UGR's. Al deze variabelen zijn, zoals eerder vermeld, afkomstig uit het populaire discours. Hieruit kan afgeleid worden dat de voornaamste verschillen, zoals verwacht, gelijk lopen aan de gestelde hypothesen. Namelijk dat binnen de UGR's meer gebruik wordt gemaakt van het populaire discours en dat de professionele critici meer gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours (zoals ook terug te vinden is in de resultaten van paragraaf 5.1 en 5.2). Daarbij komt dat de eerste twee variabelen, de emotionele authenticiteit en ontroering, slechts matig significant zijn gebleken. Beide variabelen zijn niet veelvuldig gebruikt en kunnen dus, evenals andere variabelen uit de vorige paragraaf, als mogelijke uitzonderingen gerekend worden.

Figuur (27): Variabelen 9 t/m 13

Besproken variabelen	Gebruikt online	Gebruikt offline	Verskil	Significantie
Emotionele authenticiteit	6 maal	1 maal	5	* (p = 0,05)
Ontroering	18 maal	7 maal	9	* (p = 0,019)
Ontwikkeling van de karakters	21 maal	3 maal	18	*** (p = 0,000)
Connectie met populaire cultuur	35 maal	13 maal	22	*** (p = 0,000)
Entertainmentwaarde	84 maal	59 maal	25	*** (p = 0,000)

*p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001; ns: niet significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Om tot een beantwoording te komen op de door mij gestelde vierde deelvraag kan dus gesteld worden dat er in totaal 13 variabelen zijn waarbij significantie verschillen zijn gemeten, voor wat betreft het gebruik van de twee discours onder de twee onderzoeksgroepen. Van deze 13 variabelen, zijn er 8 afkomstig uit het kunstkritisch discours en 5 vanuit het populaire discours. De 8 gemeten variabelen uit het kunstkritisch discours worden allemaal significant meer gebruikt door de professionele critici, daar waar de 5 uit het populaire discours juist meer gebruikt worden in de online recensies op imdb.com. Aangezien twee van de variabelen uit het populaire discours als (mogelijke) uitzonderingen gerekend kunnen worden levert dit de resultaten uit onderstaand figuur (28) op:

Discours	Overeenkomsten	uitzonderingen	Totaal
Kunstkritisch discours	8 variabelen	0 variabelen	8 variabelen
Populair discours	5 variabelen	2 variabelen	3 variabelen

Figuur (28): Resultaten

De grootste verschillen schuilen dus verreweg in de hantering van het kunstkritisch discours, waarvan de professionele critici het meest gebruik maken. Wanneer we de (mogelijke) uitzonderingen wel meerekenen in de resultaten komt dat uit op de volgende berekening: 8 significantie verschillen in het kunstkritisch discours, maakt dat 61,5% van de verschillen hierin schuilt (8 op de 13). Wanneer we de uitzonderingen niet meerekenen maakt dit zelfs dat de 8 significante verschillen in het kunstkritisch discours zelfs 72,7% van het totaal aantal verschillen bedraagt (8 op de 11). Waar het dus op neer komt, is dat de variabelen waarin significante verschillen zijn geconstateerd, specifiek zijn toe te kennen aan de aparte onderzoeksgroepen. De veelvuldig gebruikte criteria uit het kunstkritisch discours zijn simpelweg toe te kennen aan het gebruik van de professionele critici, daar waar de veelvuldig gebruikte populaire criteria zijn toe te kennen aan het gebruik binnen de user generated reviews. Hierin schuilt dus het grootste verschil.

In het volgende hoofdstuk worden alle deelvragen bij elkaar genomen, om tot een antwoord te komen op de door mij gehanteerde onderzoeksvraag. Daarnaast zal uitgebreid ingegaan worden op de opgestelde hypothesen, zullen er suggesties gegeven worden voor verder vervolgonderzoek en zal een algehele conclusie verstrekt worden.



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6. Conclusie

6.1 Hypothesen

Binnen dit zesde en laatste hoofdstuk zullen de resultaten, zoals gepresenteerd in hoofdstuk vijf, worden geïnterpreteerd en binnen een wetenschappelijke context worden geplaatst. Hierbij is het van belang allereerst de gestelde hypothesen te bevestigen of te falsificeren. Vervolgens wordt er antwoord gegeven op de door mij gestelde onderzoeksvraag (hoofdvraag), waarna reflectie op het verrichte onderzoek volgt. Uiteindelijk worden er nog aanbevelingen gedaan voor mogelijk vervolgonderzoek, aan de hand van de beperkingen van dit onderzoek. Eerst volgt nu dus echter de bespreking van de hypothesen, die er als volgt uitzagen:

H1a: Er is een wezenlijk verschil tussen professionele reviews en user generated reviews.

H1b: Professionele cultuurcritici handelen met meer contextueel inzicht en objectiviteit.

H1c: User generated reviews zijn veelal opgebouwd vanuit persoonlijke interpretatie.

H2a: De professionele critici maken geen gebruik van het populaire discours.

H2b: De user generated reviews maken wel gebruik van het kunstkritische discours.

H1a, verwijst naar het gebruik in discoursen tussen de professionele critici en de 'amateurs'.

Binnen de hypothese wordt uitgegaan van een wezenlijk verschil tussen beiden, in het gebruik van deze discoursen. In het vijfde hoofdstuk hebben we kunnen zien dat er meer overeenkomsten, dan verschillen te vinden zijn, voor wat betreft het gebruik van de twee discoursen. Echter zijn de gevonden verschillen groter van stuk. De significantieniveau's, betreffende verschillen zijn dan ook nagenoeg allemaal sterk significant te noemen ($p < 0,001$). Al met al valt simpelweg te stellen dat er 16 overeenkomsten te vinden zijn, voor wat betreft de gebruikte variabelen en 13 verschillen. Er is dus niet te spreken van een 'wezenlijk verschil'. Echter dienen de verschillen wel benadrukt te worden gezien de significantieniveau's hiervan.

De tweede hypothese (H1b), verwijst naar het contextueel inzicht en het objectieve handelingsvermogen van de professionele critici. Hierin wordt gesteld dat deze gespecialiseerde groep meer vanuit deze aspecten handelt dan 'het gewone volk'. Contextueel inzicht en objectiviteit zijn beide aspecten die terug te vinden zijn binnen het kunstkritisch discours. Dit wetende, kan gesteld worden dat de critici inderdaad meer handelen met objectiviteit en meer contextueel inzicht. Dit omdat de critici simpelweg (veel) meer gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours (respectievelijk 768 keer om 483 keer). Daarnaast maken de critici minder gebruik van het populaire discours, dan dat het gebruikt wordt in de UGR's (respectievelijk 220 keer om 333 keer). Dit discours is vooral gestoeld op 'ervaring en gevoel', waardoor het aspecten als objectiviteit eigenlijk overslaat. Ook dit duidt er dus op dat de critici inderdaad meer handelen met contextueel inzicht en objectiviteit

dan 'het gewone volk'.

De derde hypothese (H1c), gaat in op de opbouw van de UGR's. In de hypothese wordt gesteld dat deze recensies veelal opgebouwd zijn vanuit persoonlijke interpretatie. Dit zou er dus op duiden dat de UGR's vooral gebruik maken van het populaire discours, bij de beoordeling van films. Uit de resultaten van hoofdstuk vijf is echter gebleken dat binnen de UGR's het kunstkritisch discours het meest gebruikt wordt. Dit is de eerste hypothese die dus gefalsificeerd kan worden. De verhoudingen bij de UGR's lagen als volgt: gebruik kunstkritisch discours 59,2%, gebruik populair discours 40,8%, wat er simpelweg op duidt dat binnen de UGR's ook gehandeld wordt vanuit een kunstzinnige (complexe) benadering. Nagenoeg 6 op de 10 gebruikte variabelen is afkomstig uit het kunstkritisch discours, wat dus simpelweg maakt dat de hypothese niet bevestigd kan worden.

De laatste twee hypothesen gaan in op het gebruik van de discoursen onder de twee onderzoeksgroepen. De eerste van de twee hypothesen slaat op het gebruik van het populair discours door de professionele critici. Hierin wordt beweerd dat de critici geen gebruik zouden maken van dit discours. Wanneer we terugkijken naar de gevonden resultaten is echter te zien dat er voor 22,3% gebruik gemaakt wordt van het populair discours door de critici. Tegenover de 77,7% gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours, lijkt het gebruik van het populair discours echter weg te vallen. De geselecteerde films lenen zich, vooral door het bronmateriaal, veel voor beoordeling van 'special effects' en spektakel op zich. Om deze reden is het dan ook nagenoeg onmogelijk om deze aspecten niet binnen een recensie te betrekken. De gebruikte variabelen vanuit het populair discours, door de professionele critici, gaan dan ook in op deze (of soortgelijke) aspecten. Wellicht had een andere casestudy een ietwat ander resultaat opgeleverd voor wat betreft dit aspect. Echter kan ondanks de 22,3% gebruik van het populair discours, nog altijd gezegd worden dat de critici veel meer gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours. De hypothese kan dan ook gerust bevestigd worden.

De laatste hypothese (H2b), gaat in op het gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours binnen de UGR's. Hierin wordt gesteld dat binnen de UGR's wél gebruik wordt gemaakt van dit discours. In de resultaten van hoofdstuk vijf is dit ook duidelijk terug te vinden. Sterker nog, binnen de UGR's wordt méér gebruik gemaakt van het kunstkritisch discours (59,2% gebruik kunstkritisch discours). Deze hypothese lijkt dan ook direct bevestigd, hoewel deze meer betrekking had op het vraagstuk of er überhaupt gebruik zou worden gemaakt van het kunstkritisch discours in de UGR's.

6.2 Antwoord onderzoeksvraag

In de voorgaande paragraaf zijn de door mij gestelde hypothesen besproken en uitgewerkt. In deze paragraaf wordt gekeken naar de beantwoording van de hoofdvraag en de terugkoppeling naar de theorie uit het derde hoofdstuk. De door mij gestelde hoofdvraag betreft:

Van welk kritisch filmdiscours maken auteurs van online 'user generated' reviews en offline krantenrecensies van comic book adaptations gebruik, en welke overeenkomsten en/of verschillen zijn er te vinden?

Het antwoord op bovenstaande vraag schuilt in de beantwoording van de, eerder behandelde, deelvragen. Het is inmiddels duidelijk dat binnen UGR's overwegend gebruik gemaakt wordt van het kunstkritisch discours en dat dit ook geldt voor de professionele critici. Er zijn echter wel wezenlijke verschillen te vinden in het specifieke gebruik van de verschillende discoursen. De overeenkomsten schuilen voornamelijk in het gebruik van het populair discours. Hierbij gaat het voornamelijk om de beschrijving van gevoel, de entertainmentwaarde en de beschrijving van elementen van spektakel. Allen elementen die bijna onlosmakelijk verbonden zijn met het door mij behandelde genre: de CBA (Wolk, 2007). Hierdoor zijn deze overeenkomsten dan ook wel te verwachten. Desalniettemin wordt het populair discours door de professionele critici veel minder gebruikt dan binnen de UGR's.

Buiten de overeenkomsten is het, voor wat betreft de probleemstelling, wellicht relevanter om de focus te verleggen naar de verschillen tussen de beide vormen recensies. Dit omdat er binnen de probleemstelling uit wordt gegaan van het gegeven dat de UGR's een bedreiging vormen voor de critici als 'gatekeepers' van smaak en kwaliteit. Wanneer de recensies echter wezenlijk blijken te verschillen op het discours dat smaak en kwaliteit dicteert (het kunstkritisch discours), zou deze positie moeilijk onder vuur moeten kunnen komen te liggen. Zoals in de resultaten vanuit het voorgaande hoofdstuk blijkt, is het zo dat de meest significante verschillen juist te vinden zijn in het gebruik van dit kunstkritische discours. Terugkijkend naar H1b, kan zelfs gesteld worden dat de critici objectiever en met meer contextueel inzicht handelen. Vanuit de esthetische dispositie, zoals beschreven door Bourdieu (1984), kan dan ook gesteld worden, dat nog altijd alleen de critici een 'goed waardeoordeel' kunnen geven over de besproken producten. Hoewel het complete discours, met betrekking tot film, sinds de jaren zestig aan verandering onderhevig is geweest, lijken het nog altijd de critici die dit discours bepalen (Baumann, 2001, 2007). Het gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours binnen de UGR's is hiervan een prima voorbeeld. De 'amateur' volgt, ook in dit geval, slechts het discours dat door de critici wordt gedictieerd. Daarnaast blijft het natuurlijk nog altijd een vaststaand gegeven dat de user generated reviews onderdeel blijven van het veld van grootschalige cultuurproductie. Hiermee wil ik zeggen dat op de schrijvers hiervan geen nodige controle plaatsvindt op het gebied van symbolisch en cultureel kapitaal. Er is geen gedegen opleiding nodig om content binnen web 2.0 te plaatsen en op deze content zelf vindt ook geen controle plaats. Dit alles in tegenstelling tot de recensies geschreven door de professionele critici. Hierbij vindt controle plaats binnen het 'restricted field' zelf en geeft men (vaak via een opleiding) blijk van kennis en van voldoende

symbolisch en cultureel kapitaal om een gedegen recensie te schrijven (Bourdieu, 1989; Keen, 2007). Natuurlijk geeft het gebruik van het kunstkritisch discours binnen de UGR's blijk van benodigde kennis en mogelijk cultureel kapitaal, maar desalniettemin wordt dit gebruik gestimuleerd door de professionele critici. Zij bepalen en dicteren het discours en de 'amateurs' kunnen dit slechts volgen.

Daar waar binnen de UGR's voor 59,2% gebruik gemaakt wordt van het kunstkritisch discours, staat dit er nog altijd zwakjes bij ten opzichte van de 77,7% dat het gebruikt wordt door de critici. De benadering van film als (potentieel) kunstproduct, maakt dat het als genre binnen de complete cultuurproductie, serieus genomen kan worden. Niet alleen zijn de critici er dus voor de consument, om aanbevelingen te doen ten opzichte van keuze- en smaakpatronen, maar ook zijn ze er voor de filmsector zelf, om prestige en erkenning te delen (Verdaasdonk, 2003; Bourdieu, 1984; Becker, 1982).

Hoewel de onderzoeken van onder andere Tancer (2009) en Duan & Whinston (2008), ons een richting in sturen waarin UGR's een meer prominente rol lijken te vervullen, neemt dit nog niet weg dat de critici nodig blijven. De UGR's kunnen deze prominente rol alleen vervullen wanneer zij gebruik kunnen maken van een discours dat door anderen is voorgeschreven. De geleerdheid en het contextueel inzicht van de critici zijn (en blijven) hiervoor van belang.

Om dus een definitief antwoord te geven op de onderzoeksvraag, kan gesteld worden dat beide onderzoeksgroepen overwegend gebruik maken van het kunstkritisch discours. De overeenkomsten schuilen voornamelijk in het beschrijven van de beleving van de gerecenseerde film(s), daar waar de verschillen schuilen in de hantering van het kunstkritisch discours. Het gegeven dat het kunstkritisch discours voor 77,7% gehanteerd wordt door de professionele critici, tegenover 59,2% binnen de UGR's, maakt dan ook dat de critici nog altijd degenen zijn die het prominente discours dicteren. De rol van de criticus als 'gatekeeper' van smaak en kwaliteit blijft dus behouden. Zij dicteren het kunstkritisch discours en de complexe benadering van kunst op zich, wat ruimte biedt voor de schrijvers van UGR's om steeds zinnigere en belangrijker recensies te schrijven en publiceren binnen web 2.0.

6.3 Beperkingen en aanbevelingen

Binnen deze thesis is een vergelijking gemaakt tussen online reviews en professionele recensies uit gerenommeerde dagbladen. Hierbij is gekeken naar de gebruikte discoursen, de variabelen uit deze discoursen en de frequenties hiervan. Daarnaast is de significantie van zowel de overeenkomsten, als de verschillen gemeten en gepresenteerd in het vijfde en zesde hoofdstuk. Echter is niet gekeken op welke manier de variabelen werden ingezet. Wanneer er positief werd gesproken met betrekking tot bijvoorbeeld de variabele: complexiteit/ambigüiteit, werd dit evengoed meegerekend als wanneer hier in slechte zin over werd gesproken. In mogelijk vervolgonderzoek zou hiernaar gekeken kunnen worden.

Mogelijk kunnen andere resultaten worden gepresenteerd wanneer rekening wordt gehouden met positief en/of negatief commentaar ten opzichte van de variabelen.

Naast positief en/of negatief commentaar is in dit onderzoek geen rekening gehouden met de lengte van de recensies. Wel is deze lengte opgenomen in het databestand, echter is er geen gedegen analyse van gemaakt. De lengte van de reviews biedt logischerwijs inzicht in de ruimte die kranten en recensenten rekenen voor de beoordeling van films. Dit heeft mogelijk gevolgen voor de manier waarop de recensies zijn ingedeeld en welke variabelen daarvoor gebruikt worden. Ook hier kan in mogelijk vervolgonderzoek rekening mee gehouden worden.

De laatste beperking schuilt in de 'hoeveelheid' van mijn databestand. Er is nu onderzoek gedaan naar 200 verschillende recensies, waarvan 100 afkomstig van imdb.com en 100 uit verschillende gerenommeerde Amerikaanse dagbladen. De grote van dit databestand maakt dat de analyses vanuit de two tailed chi-square test niet altijd even nauwkeurig zullen zijn. Kleine afwijkingen kunnen al grote gevolgen hebben voor de uiteindelijke resultaten. Om deze reden zijn in het resultaten hoofdstuk dan ook uitzonderingen opgenomen binnen de resultaten. Dit omdat bij mogelijk vervolgonderzoek voor die specifieke variabelen wellicht andere resultaten naar voren zullen komen. Wanneer het databestand wordt uitgebreid naar ongeveer 1000 te analyseren recensies, zullen de uiteindelijke resultaten natuurlijk representatiever zijn, maar wellicht ook nauwkeuriger.

Bijlage (1): Lijst geselecteerde CBA's

Film	Comic/ Graphic novel	Jaar van uitgave film
X-men	Marvel's X-men	2000
Spiderman	The Amazing Spiderman	2002
Fantastic Four	Marvel's Fantastic Four	2005
Sin City	Frank Miller's Sin City	2005
Superman Returns	DC Comic's Superman	2006
300	Frank Miller's 300	2007
Iron Man	Tales of Suspense	2008
The Incredible Hulk	Marvel's Hulk	2008
The Dark Knight	Batman: The Dark Knight Returns	2008
Watchmen	Frank Miller's Watchmen series	2009

Lijst (1): CBA's gebaseerd op 'bekende' comics/ graphic novels

Film	Comic/ Graphic novel	Jaar van uitgave film
The Crow	The Crow	1994
Spawn	Todd McFarlane's Spawn	1997
Blade	Blade	1998
From Hell	Alan Moore's From Hell	2001
Road to Perdition	Allan Collin's Road to Perdition	2002
American Splendor	American Splendor	2003
Bulletproof Monk	Bulletproof Monk	2003
A History of Violence	John Wagner's a History of Violence	2005
V for Vendetta	Alan Moore's V for Vendetta	2006
30 days of night	30 days of night	2007

Lijst (2): CBA's gebaseerd op 'minder bekende' comics/ graphic novels

Bijlage (2): Codeerschema

Iedere recensie:

1. Datum recensie
2. Naam recensent
3. Bron
4. Lengte recensie
5. Gerecenseerde film
6. Titel recensie

Variabelen per discours:

Kunstkritisch discours:

- (1) Positief/negatief commentaar
- (2) Regisseur is benoemd
- (3) Vergelijking tussen regisseurs
- (4) Vergelijking tussen films
- (5) Interpretatie van de film
- (6) Benoeming van de maatschappelijke context
- (7) Context van de CBA wordt benoemd
- (8) Connectie met hoge kunst
- (9) Het gebruik van high-art termen
- (10) Originaliteit/ innovatie
- (11) Complexiteit/ambigüiteit
- (12) Serieusheid/intelligent
- (13) De tijdloosheid van het besproken werk
- (14) Subtiliteit/ geloofwaardigheid
- (15) Focus op acteurs/ talent
- (16) Negatieve kijk op populaire cultuur.

Populair discours:

- (1) Negatieve kijk op hoge kunst
- (2) Gevoel van participatie
- (3) Emotionele authenticiteit
- (4) Humor/ grappigheid
- (5) Spanning/suspens
- (6) Ontroering

- (7) Ontwikkeling karakters
- (8) Voorspelling van de reactie van het publiek
- (9) Film als product
- (10) Focus op het persoonlijk leven van de acteur(s)
- (11) Focus op elementen van 'spektakel'
- (12) Connectie met populaire cultuur
- (13) Entertainmentwaarde.

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**"X-men, Spiderman, The Fantastic
Four, Sin City, Superman Returns,
300, Iron Man, The Incredible
Hulk, The Dark Knight, Watchmen,
The Crow, Spawn, Blade, From
Hell, Road to Perdition, American
Splendor, Bulletproof Monk, A
History of Violence, V for
Vendetta, 30 Days of Night"**

Master thesis

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ONLINE VS OFFLINE



Digitale bijlage (1): Gecodeerde online reviews

5 User generated reviews: X-men

Review 1:

Not a "Comic-book Movie", 18 July 2000

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: infinitesc@hotmail.com from Mobile, Alabama

There's no doubt about it, X-Men is not a stereotypical "comic-book film".

ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE Whenever a movie is made that is based on comic books, there is always a fear that it can and will be typically pigeonholed into the "comic book film" genre and that the movie is basically made for the fans of that comic book. Comic-book films are usually unrealistic and unappealing to the general audience. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK

Bryan Singer, however, did a wonderful job REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD at making X-Men a movie that will not only overjoy the fans of the comic book, but also the general movie-goer as well. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK - ENTERTAINMENTVARIERING The movie is grounded, without the flighty unrealism of comic book material, and it delivers a message about prejudice that has always been what X-Men were about: fighting for a world that hates them. INTERPRETATIE VAN DE FILM

The performances are outstanding, especially Hugh Jackman who, in my opinion, did a dead-on Wolverine, and Patrick Stewart, who never failed to show the peace and self-control that Professor Charles Xavier always strove to maintain. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

Aside the characters, the plot was original (I couldn't tell you what was going to happen in the end by the middle of the movie) and most importantly: the world was REAL SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. The only suspension of disbelief that is required is the assumption that these genetic mutations can happen, and did, causing these extraordinary people. Honestly, I was a little disappointed that the colorful high-flare costumes were omitted, but I instantly forgave Singer when I realized why. It was simply to add to the realism SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID.

All in all, X-Men was excellent. GEBRUIK HIGH-ART TERMEN If you're a fan of the comic book series as I was, then you'll endlessly enjoy seeing these characters come to life. And if you've never been exposed to the comic book, this movie will give you an entertaining way to be exposed to VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK its message about fear, hatred, and prejudice. INTERPRETATIE VAN DE FILM

Review 2:

An imaginatively realized sci-fi thriller, 22 July 2003

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: FABMAB from New York, NY

Tibetan Buddhist teacher Robert Thurman writes in Inner Revolution: "In karmic evolution, the successful actions that lead to positive evolutionary mutations such as a human life are those of generosity, morality, tolerance, enterprise, concentration, and intelligence. Their opposites - stinginess, injustice, anger, laziness, distraction, and ignorance - are unsuccessful actions, which lead to negative evolutionary mutations that take you down the chain through animal incarnations." We got to thinking about this when we realized that the mutants in the sci-fi thriller X-Men are of two types: the generous, moral, and intelligent ones, and the animal-like ones acting out of revenge and anger. The message is clear: evolution can go toward the good or the bad, and there will always be a battle between the two possibilities. INTERPRETATIE

VAN DE FILM

X-Men, with stories revolving around the activities of a group of mutant superheroes, has been a phenomenally successful franchise for Marvel Comics. **CONTEXT CBA** Now director Bryan Singer (The Usual Suspects) and screenplay writer David Hayter have adapted this series for the screen. **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** The movie exposes the battle going on for America's soul. In doing so, it goes right to the heart of the country's shadow - our continuing inability to deal with those who are different from us, either by race, ethnic heritage, sexual preference, or generation. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**. The story taps into the reservoir of feelings we have about diversity, tolerance, and exclusivity. And, let's admit it, all of us, at one time or another, have felt like a mutant outsider different from the "norms" of society and cut off from the "in" crowd. **EMO AUTHENTICITEIT**

U.S. Senator Robert Kelly (Bruce Davison) has a cause. There are mutants living in American communities, and nobody knows how and where they might use their strange and strong powers. He wants to protect human citizens by passing legislation to require them to register with the government. Indeed, even mutants with the best intentions can't always control their impact on others. When Rogue (Anna Paquin), a Mississippi teenager kisses her boyfriend for the first time, he ends up in a coma for three weeks. She can absorb the energy and memories of anyone she touches.

Fleeing to Alaska, Rogue meets Wolverine (Hugh Jackman), another mutant who has amazing healing powers, which come in handy when his retractable adamantium claws inadvertently inflict damage. These two "freaks" as the locals call them eventually team up and find their way to Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart), the world's most potent telepath who has started a school for "gifted students" - a.k.a. mutants. His key assistants are Jean Grey (Famke Janssen) who has telekinetic and telepathic skills, Cyclops (James Marsden) whose eyes release energy blasts, and Storm (Halle Berry) who can manipulate weather disturbances. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

Not only must these X-Men fight the forces of bigotry and repression afoot in America, they must square off against Magneto (Ian McKellen), a mutant who has survived the Holocaust and now believes that a war with the humans is inevitable. He concocts a plan to turn the world's leaders into mutants at a special U.N. gathering on Ellis Island. The X-Men come to the rescue and must contend with his evil team consisting of Sabretooth (Tyler Mane), a beast-like warrior; Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos), a metamorph; and Toad (Ray Park), a high-jumping monster with a ten-foot tongue.

Thanks to its thematic riches, X-Men is far more interesting than the Batman superhero flicks. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** Most fascinating is the love/hate relationship between the peaceful Professor Xavier and the power-hungry Magneto. In the last scene of the film, they play a game of chess in a prison holding Magneto. We all know that the mutant villain has not made his last move.

Review 3:

The usual tedious superhero blockbuster ENTERTAINMENTVARING for humorless HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID, fun-hating fanboys VOORSPELLING REACTIE VAN HET PUBLIEK, 7
December 2006



Author: [J. Spurlin](#) from United States

Fanboys have no sense of fun. It's partly their influence that makes these superhero tales increasingly self-important and witless. If you flip through comic books today, you'll find they tackle issues such as drug addiction, street crime, racial bigotry and homosexuality, all while

muscle-bound louts in circus costumes are flying around and shooting laser beams out of their fists. And no one fights crime any more; they just wrestle with their own demons. I recently scanned a comic book where an old Superman and a young Superman were throwing trucks and boulders at each other as they screamed pop-psych jargon about their grievances in what seemed like an apocalyptic episode of "Dr. Phil."

This movie opens with a scene in a Nazi concentration camp—yes, a superhero movie with a realistic Nazi concentration camp. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK/ INTERPRETATIE VAN DE FILM—where we meet the villain Magneto as a boy, who discovers his ability to move metal with his mind. Once we're in the present (or the "near-future"), we see the U.S. Senate debating on whether mutants like Magneto should be exposed and listed on a public register. It's like the yellow stars and number-tattoos Jews were forced to wear in Nazi Germany. Get it? I don't. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK - INTERPRETATIE. How is a fear of Jews parallel to a fear of people who can walk through walls, shoot fire out of their eyes or control the weather with their minds? SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT In this movie the earnest idealists are against the mutant registry and the snooty hypocrites are in favor of it. Frankly I'm with the snooty hypocrites. What would we do if there were real super-powered mutants among us? Thanks to the fanboys' thirst for "realism" even in comic book adventures, the issues of Wolverine and his ilk are made to seem like urgent social problems.

Fanboys have no sense of humor either. A sense of humor is not the ability to laugh at everything, but knowing when something is funny and when it isn't. Fanboys have nerd-humor. Nerd-humor comes from the desire to condescend to the very thing that one takes deeply seriously. It comes out in this movie when Logan (later to be Wolverine) mocks silly superhero names like Cyclops and Storm. "What's your name," he says to Professor Xavier, who uses a wheelchair, "Wheels?" HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID This sounds like the movie spoofing itself, but it isn't. It's the movie congratulating itself for being aware of its own absurdities; and once it acknowledges them, it can dismiss them and take itself all the more seriously. SERIEUSHEID/INTELLIGENT This is in contrast to the 1960s TV show "Batman," which really was a spoof. CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR But a fanboy doesn't get it, not even if you tell him the joke. "Yeah, I know it's a spoof, but what kind of Batman has a pot belly?"

Marvel Comics used to have a jaunty sense of fun, but that's the company that introduced social relevance and superheroes who have everyday problems just like us. The DC Comics concept of heroes that are larger than life is dead and now even Batman and Superman have "issues." This opinion will guarantee me 0 of 564 useful votes, but I think the ultimate superhero show is the wonderfully ludicrous cartoon series "Challenge of the SuperFriends" (now on DVD). VERGELIJKING FILMS. It's funny GRAPPIG, fast-paced and entertaining in a way that a movie like this never could be. ENTERTAINMENTVARING

"X-Men" (the word "the" was dropped so that no one would give up on the title before he finished reading it) offers the usual fare for fans of fantasy blockbusters. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK: great old actors (Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellan) spouting nonsense; younger actors delivering dismal wisecracks ("You're a dick!"); rapid cutting so that we're unable to savor a performance or believe that an actor is making more than one move at a time during a fight sequence; POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR CGI out the wazoo; grand-looking sets and fabulous sound design for those who want their junk to look and sound good; and overblown music FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL.

Obviously I don't like the movie, but it could have been far worse. CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. I watched the whole thing; whereas I shut off "The Fantastic Four" ("The Fantastic 4" or "Fntstc 4") after 30 minutes. VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS. And I was amazed how compelling and subtle Anna Paquin could be in a sea of SFX. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. I kept wishing she and Hugh Jackman would steal away from the freak show, sit down at a coffee shop and just talk for 90 minutes.

Review 4:

Execrably bad, 16 July 2000



Author: [RJC-4](#) from USA

Was "The Usual Suspects" a fluke? **Bryan Singer** **REGISSEUR BENOEMD** turns in a decidedly B-movie job directing this flat, predictable comics adaptation. It's almost too faithful to its original medium, **CONTEXT CBA** with 2-d performances from all the principals except for Hugh Jackman (as the grouchy Wolverine, he displays the closest thing to personality among these cardboard cut-outs). Patrick Stewart is lifeless. Ian McKellen, who was believably dark in Singer's "Apt Pupil," here only looks very drowsy **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. And the X-Men themselves look like the cast of "Dawson's Creek" in drag. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID-CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

This film has endless problems. The action sequences, and in particular the climactic battle in and on the Statue of Liberty, look terribly staged: just as on the comics page, the characters halt to strike dramatic poses, or dotingly brandish their "super powers" (one of them, hilariously, even utters at one point: "Storm, use your power!"). **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** It simply doesn't work any more than if Singer had put speech bubbles above the characters' heads. Compare these silly little fights to the superb sequences in Jet Li's "Black Mask," (1996), a film shot for a fraction of this one's budget **FILM ALS PRODUCT** but obviously with much greater talent and vision **VERGELIJKING FILMS**.

For a comic with a rich graphical past, the movie's art direction delivers a strangely bland, sterile look, both for Professor X's school and for the Liberty set. Both look low-budget, but neither is quite as bad as the villain's secret seaside hideout, which Singer shot in such darkness that nary a detail can be seen.

Oddly, "X-Men" looks like two different movies. The first 15 minutes are lavishly designed and shot, from the opening flashback of Jews herded into a concentration camp to the discovery of a Wolverine slumming in a moody northern logging camp. Then, abruptly, the flair is gone, and for the remaining 90 minutes we get a film that looks like one of the Star Trek TV franchise vehicles **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. (Except for Storm's look: it's pure Penthouse Magazine, ca. 1975, with Halle Barry's vapid expression rounding out the bill.) The villains are half-comically done, but even that is a blunder by Singer -- we don't really get any comic relief from them, and we can hardly worry too much about the X-men if they're beset by the likes of a villain called Toad, and even less when they remind us of the far wittier and better-looking send-up of all this nonsense, last year's "Mystery Men."

Apart from the inanities, there is also a true sin: it's unforgivably trite when a pulp fiction like this one hijacks the Holocaust to inflate its meagre storyline and insincere theme. "X-Men" isn't really an allegory of genocide, or even merely of racism. **INTERPRETATIE/ CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** That stuff is just tacked on to what is really an exercise in big fights and big boobs -- the old Marvel formula. Fights and boobs aren't bad in their own right, but they're done much better elsewhere without the pretensions to social justice. **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Review 5:

A good comic book film., 20 August 2009



Author: [Sirus the Virus](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

X-Men is a decent comic book film. Not quite as good as some of the ones we have nowadays, but I still think it's a good film. I didn't even think it was the best in the series. I preferred X2. X-men is from director Bryan Singer REGISSEUR BENOEMD, who has done some damn good films. Like The Usual Suspects. Singer does a good job with the first two films and should've stayed with this series. Instead, he left the X-men films for Superman Returns, which wasn't so good. I found that film irritating, and too long. None of the X-men films are that long, and they kept my interest. The X-men are cooler, more unique, and more interesting than Superman. ENTERTAINMENEVARING A big chunk of the X-men are interesting, like Wolverine, who had an unexplained cast until his prequel came out. I also like Rogue(Anna Paquin). Mystique(Robbecca Romajn-Stamos)is sort of sexy, but kind of blue. I even think that Magneto(Ian Mckellan) even though he's an evil bastard. I can't quite understand why he's evil, though I feel sorry for him because he was in a concentration camp EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT. X-men is a well made comic book film that deserves more credit than it's received. It isn't quite the best in the series, but it's a good entry. I won't go into much detail with the plot, but I think X-Men is definitely a recommendation. CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

5 User generated reviews: Spiderman

Review 1:

Raimi and Maguire weave a magical web in this excellent comic adaptation, 9 April 2004

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [Joseph Riesenbeck \(eazyguy62\)](#) from United States

Studios lately have been known to spend almost \$200 million dollars bringing a comic book super hero to life on the silver screen. With \$200 million dollars you can buy many state of the art special effects for the director to full around with to his hearts content **FILM ALS PRODUCT**. If in the process, though, he decides to fore-go an entertaining story and script, characters that we can get to know and sympathize with, and good actors to bring those characters to life, all the special effects in the world isn't going to amount to a hill of beans. Fortunately for us, in bringing Marvel Comic's Spiderman to life, **Sam Raimi REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** did care about those little details and the audience is richly rewarded because of it.

One of the trickier tasks when transferring a film such as Spiderman to film is in giving us enough background story. If a writer and director spend too much time on the origins of the character, it has a tendency to bog the rest of the film down. Likewise, if it is given short thrift, we never have a chance to become involved emotionally with the super-hero. In Spiderman, Raimi, aided immeasurably by Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker/Spiderman strikes just the right note. **Maguire is such an accomplished actor, that he immediately establishes Peter Parker as someone we will care about throughout the film FOCUS ACTEURS/TALENT - ONTROERING**. He has a crush on the beautiful girl next door, Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst), is constantly harassed by the school jerk, and has a best friend, Harry (James Franco), who's relationship with his father Norman (Willem Dafoe) is far from perfect. As for Peter, he has an exceptional home life with his Uncle Ben (Cliff Robertson) and Aunt May (Rosemary Harris) which is probably one of the reasons Harry develops an early kinship with him. That and the fact that Harry's father seems to think more of Peter than he does of his own son at times.

After having been bitten by a mutated spider, Peter awakens one morning to find himself with some exceptional super powers. He develops muscles that he didn't have before, has reflexes Michael Jordan would be proud of, and can shoot a web like nobody's business. It is during these early scenes of discovery by Peter that the film truly excels. Maguire is like a child whom after taking his first steps, learns he can motor about the house quite nicely, thank you very much. We can't help but have as much fun watching Peter Parker hone his skills as he seems to have in being able to do these magnificent feats. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

Another fine aspect of Spiderman is the love story that develops between Parker and Mary Jane. As Peter Parker, he is never able to quite overcome his inability to tell Mary Jane of his true feelings. Later, as Spiderman, there is a wonderful scene between him and Mary Jane in a drenching downpour that any romantic film would envy.

Whereas some have not been too enamored of Dafoe's portrayal as Norman Osborn/Green Goblin, I found both to be right on the mark. As Norman, we see how his continuous drive to control his company alienates and spoils the relationship he has with his son Harry. It's not that Norman is an evil person, his quest for power has led him to more or less take his son for granted. Later, when after a lab accident, it is the schizophrenic battle between the normal Harry and the Evil Harry that brings the Green Goblin to life. It would have been easy for Raimi to have the lab accident just turn Harry instantly into the Green Goblin, but instead we get a richer more dramatic story that we wouldn't have had otherwise. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

Likewise James Franco, who looks enough like Dafoe that they could be father and son, is a youth who seems tormented by the fact that no matter what success he achieves, his father never gives him his just due. Kirsten Dunst is also beautiful and charming as Mary Jane. Her romantic scenes with Spiderman are wonderfully played, and she has an especially moving

scene with Peter Parker as the film draws to a close.

As for the special effects, they are indeed spectacular FOCUS ELEMENT SPEKTAKEL. As Spiderman swoops between buildings on his web, you won't think once that it's not really him doing so. When reading IMDB reviews of this film or any other film that depends heavily on special effects, one must keep in mind that it has become more or less a hobby among some to downgrade the effects of any film so my advice is to just ignore the criticism in that regard. The effects here are fine.

Two years ago, it was with quite a bit of eagerness that I anticipated Raimi's Spiderman film and it lived up to my hopes in every aspect. If the impending sequel comes even close to being as good as the original, it'll be a job well done. And if a film such as Spiderman can have me counting the days until Spiderman II, than I have no choice but to give it my grade, which for Spiderman is an A. CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 2:

One of the best movies of the year!!!, 5 May 2002



Author: [Kristine \(kristinedrama14@msn.com\)](mailto:Kristine.kristinedrama14@msn.com) from Chicago, Illinois

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

Spider-Man is seriously the best movie of the summer! I couldn't believe how much fun I had watching this movie: CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE the fights, the costumes, the characters... I'm not even a comic book nerd, no offense to those who are, just I couldn't believe how much of a nerd I felt like when I was jumping and getting excited to see this movie. I waited an hour in line to see this movie with my friends and I have to tell you that it was completely worth it. This is the crazy movie of the summer, but it's one of the best blockbusters to come out of the new millennium. I was never into Spider-Man, didn't really know about the story, but seeing this movie, I think I'm going to take a trip to the comic book store probably.

Peter Parker, his best friend Harry Osborn, and Peter's secret crush Mary Jane Watson visit a genetics laboratory with their high school class. While taking photos in the laboratory, Peter is bitten on the hand by a genetically engineered "super spider". Feeling unwell, he passes out shortly after arriving home. Meanwhile, scientist and owner of Oscorp Norman Osborn, Harry's father, is attempting to preserve his company's military contract, knowing that its loss will mean the end of his business. He experiments on himself with his company's new, but unstable, performance-enhancing chemical vapor which increases his speed, strength, and stamina. However, it also causes him to become insane and kills his assistant. The next morning, Peter wakes to find that his previously impaired vision has improved and that his body has changed into a more muscular physique. At school, he finds himself producing webbing and having the quick reflexes to avoid being injured in a fight with bully Flash Thompson. Peter escapes from the school and realizes that he has acquired spider-like abilities from the spider bite. He quickly learns to scale walls, long jump across building rooftops and swing via webs from his wrists. Norman being ticked off that he didn't get a muscular body he decides to destroy the world! OK, that's not exactly the reason, but I did sense tension there. ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS

I had so much fun watching this movie CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, I can't tell you how many incredible scenes there were, I think my favorite was between Norman coming to Thanksgiving dinner and the high tension when he finds out who Spider Man is and the last fight scene between Spider Man and the Green Goblin was awesome SPANNING SUSPENS! The ending is a cliff hanger, so I'm looking forward to seeing the next Spider Man. This was a

great movie, I highly recommend it, Spider-Man has great effects FOCUS ELEMENT SPEKTAKEL, cheesy acting, fun one liners HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID, and the upside down kiss that will be talked about for generations to come.

Review 3:

Do not understand the hype, 16 November 2007

★★★★★★★★★

Author: [Doc_Gibbons84](#) from Champaign, Illinois

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

This movie, as well as the whole Spider-Man franchise, has to be one of the most over-hyped in recent memory. From the perspective of a casual theater-goer, I can perhaps see how it can be so popular. After all, the action scenes are very well done and quite numerous FOCUS ELEMENT SPEKTAKEL. But from the perspective of a movie-lover who is very critical of things like story, character, acting, and plot devices, it fails on many levels. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR

I'll start with story problems. One of the biggest failings of this movie is that the story is so contrived, and the villain's motives are so unexplained SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID, that it leaves you wondering how a movie can be so successful when it's filled with amateur mistakes. The Green Goblin is a good example. At first, his motives are understandable – he wants to eliminate his firm's competition and then, in a rage, he murders the board of directors after they betray him by selling the company out from under him. After this, however, his motives become vague. Why is he interested in bringing further mayhem to the city? The fan-boy's answer will most likely be, "He's insane." VOORSPELLING REACTIE VAN HET PUBLIEK And yet, for a supposedly insane character, he thinks and behaves pretty rationally when it suits the plot for him to do so. At any rate, justifying a bad guy's random actions by labeling him insane is simply lazy story-telling, because it eliminates the need to develop a multi-dimensional villain with motives that make sense.

Another problem with the movie is that things happen for no other reason than because the plot demands it, which is also lazy story-telling. COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT For instance, the screenwriters obviously wanted a climax where the Green Goblin forces Spider-Man to choose between saving the woman he loves or a bus full of children. Unable to think of a plausible way that this could happen, they write a scene where the Green Goblin decides to destroy Spider-Man by using what he loves as bait. By this point, Goblin had learned Spider-Man's true identity, so it begs the question of why the Goblin didn't simply break into Peter Parker's house and slit his throat while he was sleeping. Obviously, this wouldn't work in a super-hero movie, but the screenwriters never should have left such a loose thread dangling. A good remedy to this would have been for the Goblin not to learn Spider-Man's identity at all.

On to the acting. Most of the actors do the best job they can, given the material, but one actor stands out as a perfect example of bad casting: James Franco. Franco plays Peter's buddy Harry Osborn, whose father is the Green Goblin. He can best be recognized by his perpetually mopey face and whiny voice. I think he must have gone to the Hayden Christensen school of acting, where they teach you to emphasize the wrong syllables, whine and cry a lot, and put a permanent scowl on your face whenever you have to display emotion. Also, J.K. Simmons chews the scenery as the fast-talking newspaper editor who seems to be channeling the spirit of Jackie Cooper as Perry White in the Superman movies. Sporting a ridiculous-looking flattop toupee, Simmons spews his dialog with the pace and tempo of a narrator from a 1940's radio serial. Simmons is a fine actor ordinarily, so I can only assume he was simply acting as directed. FOCUS ACTEURS/TALENT

But what I disliked the most about this movie is the distinct feeling I got, especially towards the end, that I was watching an overlong episode of "Power Rangers." The over-the-top villain spews corny lines like, "Time to die!", and the hero responds in kind with equally corny hero lines. I can understand why this kind of movie would appeal to children; when I was a kid I lived for movies like this. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** But what I really can't understand is the huge adult following that these films have. At a certain point in your life, it just becomes hard to enjoy campy, over-the-top cartoony movies like this.

Review 4:

Spiderman A Good Comic Book Movie With Some Flaws, 9 June 2009



Author: [tburke85](#) from United States

Spider-man is a good comic book movie with some flaws. I prefer the sequel over this one but the original is still a solid comic book film brought to life by director Sam Raimi **REGISSEUR BENOEMD** and the talented cast. Raimi does a decent enough job telling the origin story of nerdy high schooler Peter Parker into the web slinging superhero Spider-man. The cast includes Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker/Spider-man, William Dafoe as Norman Osbourne/The Green Goblin, Kristen Dunst as Mary Jane Watson, and James Franco as Harry Osbourne. Maguire is admirable in his role as both Peter Parker and Spider-man giving us character who is nerdy but is willing to put others before himself. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** He's a teenager with problems and I think that's why people can identify with him. He's also a man in love with his beautiful neighbor Mary Jane Watson. Dunst as Mary Jane is okay as Peter's love but isn't really given much to do besides eventually being the damsel in distress later on in the film. William Dafoe is impressive as Norman Osbourne and his evil alter ego The Green Goblin. I like the fact they made the Goblin a split personality a side effect of the performance enhancers his character takes in the movie. His costume did look a little corny and it resembled something you'd see in an episode of Power Rangers or something but Dafoe makes for an imposing villain none the less **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. James Franco is good as Norman's son Harry but like Dunst he isn't given much to do either except to show up here and there throughout the movie. Rosemary Harris as Aunt May and Cliff Robertson in a small role as Uncle Ben are effective supporting characters. They both have good chemistry with Maguire making them believable as his characters aunt and uncle. Bruce Campbell has a brief appearance as a wrestling announcer and he makes the best of his small part in the film. The special effects are state of the art **FOCUS ELEMENTEN VAN SPEKTAKEL** and the action/fight sequences are well executed but at times you can definitely tell it's CG which is okay but not as good as when you see two worthy adversaries without costumes duking it out instead of something created in a computer. The pacing in between the action was a little slow and the dialogue wasn't the best at times. Overall though Spider-man is still an entertaining comic book **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** with just the right amount of action, some suspense **SPANNING/SUSPENS**, humor **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**, a little romance, and solid performances by the cast that make for an enjoyable movie to watch. **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Review 5:

An awesome picture, damn near perfect, 12 July 2008



Author: [thefinisher_23](#) from United States

This is the film that will forever be credited with the revamping of the superhero industry, and definitely deserves that merit. It's a superhero movie at the finest level with motivated

characters soaring action sequences and truly devious Nemesis. Let me just say that Tobey Maguire was the perfect casting choice for Peter Parker. For better or for worse he will probably always be remembered as Spider-Man and that because by the series second installment he had totally immersed himself in the role and you did realize it was him anymore you just saw Peter. Im not a Kristen Dunst fan at all but she did give a great performance in this FOCUS ACTEURS/TALENT. James Franco used this to establish himself as a very solid convincing actor. Then there's Willem Dafoe who truly is a great actor and is consistently underrated. He played such a great villain helpless, lost, and a borderline weak person as Norman Osborne. When he becomes the goblin he's a wise cracking, evil, motivated and powerful killer. Kudos also go to Cliff Robertson, Rosemary Harris, and J.K. Simmons for playing their roles true, entertaining CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE and in Simmons case funny HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID. The plot was great because it felt like you were watching a comic-book film which made it fun and involving GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE. I never read the comics but they seemed to stay true to the source material. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID It's also never cheesy or under-developed which is essential to a superhero film. I loved this movie, it's timeless TIJDLOOSHEID, fun and overall a fantastic achievement CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENWAARDE

5 User generated reviews: The Fantastic Four

Review 1:

Somebody Finally Got it Right!!!, 30 June 2005



Author: [TomAW](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

Wow! Just WOW! Let me start by saying I'm not a regular Fantastic Four reader, but I am a huge superhero fan and I've been reading comic books and watching superhero movies since the mid seventies. Spider-Man's my favorite, so I'm familiar with the FF characters from team-ups, crossovers etc. A few days ago I was visiting a friend in NYC and he treated me to a special advance showing of the Fantastic Four.

Now I've been watching superhero movies since the original Superman, and year after year, film after film, they've gotten close, but there always seems to be something missing. With Spider-Man, for example, I liked it, but I thought the Goblin could have been much better and Toby M. made a great Peter Parker, but mediocre Spider-man. **VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS**

But the Fantastic Four . . . this one seemed to finally put it all together. The good guys were good (without being goody-goody) the bad guy was bad (without being a caricature) the setting was grounded and realistic (not an altered reality like the early Batman films) allowing just enough suspension of disbelief where it was really needed. **SURE THERE WERE MOMENTS THAT COULD BE QUESTIONED: "Would that really happen? Would he really say that?"**, but it's just about impossible to make an ambitious film like this without a few moments like that. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** What I really loved is they had POWERS, and they used them. You didn't get the feeling (as you did with X-Men for example) that they were being held back. They looked like they were coming right off the comic page.

Here's a little breakdown: Chris Evans/Human Torch - Amazing. I think a lot of credit has to be given to whoever did the casting on this one. **NO OFFENSE TO MR. EVANS, BUT I GOT THE FEELING THAT PLAYING AN OVER-THE-TOP superstar thrill seeker wasn't much of a stretch for him** - **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN ACTEURS** if it was I really owe him a tip of the hat, but he seemed completely natural in the role. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** If Sam Raimi had thought to put Chris E. in the Spider-Man suit and let Toby M. play Peter P., we might have had a very interesting film **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**. And kudos to the special effects department on this one, **FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL** when the Torch "Flames On" you can practically feel the heat coming off the screen. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**

Michael Chiklis/Thing - Again, the casting was perfect on this. Michael C. WAS the Thing. **HE MADE YOU FEEL HIS PAIN, BUT HE DIDN'T WALLOW IN IT.** **ONTROERING** While I thought they might do this with CGI, I'm glad they didn't. MC brought a depth and realness to the character that no computer could hope to match. **THERE WERE A FEW MOMENTS WHEN THE SUIT DIDN'T LOOK QUITE RIGHT, BUT IT WAS NEVER ENOUGH TO DESTROY THE MOMENT** **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID - POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR.**

Ioan Gruffuld/Mr. Fantastic - Ioan G. did a good job, but he didn't have as much to work with as the other characters. He was believable and likable, but not a standout with everything else that was going on. **THE SPECIAL EFFECTS WERE WELL DONE, BUT SINCE YOUR BRAIN KNOWS PEOPLE CAN'T ACTUALLY STRETCH, IT NEVER QUITE LOOKED "REAL".** Still, to the filmmakers credit **FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL**, they didn't hold back, and there were scenes (such as a fight with the Thing) that had me sitting slack jawed and amazed.

Jessica Alba/Invisible Woman - Jessica A. is simply breathtaking to look at. Now that I've said

that, I feel a little less guilty saying her acting, while not bad, was a little flat. Still, she brought a special quality to the character, **and many, many men and boys will walk out of the theater in love with her** VOORSPELLING REACTIE VAN HET PUBLIEK. The invisibility/force field effects were generally well done, but not quite what I expected, and at times I found myself wishing they had done them a bit differently.

Julian McMahon/Dr. Doom - Like many fans, I had been hoping for Doctor Doom - RULER OF LATVERIA, but in the context of this film, you can see that it wouldn't really have worked. This is an origin piece CONTEXT CBA. The Fantastic Four aren't really the Fantastic Four yet. They're just a bunch of confused geeks trying to figure out who and what they are. Doctor Doom - RULER OF LATVERIA would have dispatched with them before breakfast. The ending, however, perfectly sets up a sequel (and I'm almost certain there WILL be a sequel - this film is too good not to get one) in which the a mature Fantastic Four can face a mature Dr. Doom. For this film, Julian M. was subtle yet powerful. He wasn't a cartoon bad guy, but a real bad guy. The kind you've met before who will shake your hand and look you in the eye while he's sticking a knife in your back. **His relationship with Sue is creepy and it really defines his character** SPANNING/SUSPENS. Everyone in the audience can see that he doesn't even understand what love is. To him, love is possession. Toward the end, he becomes truly frightening, but it's not a jump like some villains. **You could see the evil smoldering below the surface from his first on-screen moment.** ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS

Overall, the film was well balanced and a LOT of fun CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. It was very funny at points HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID, it was very heart rending at other points ONTROERING. Dramatic, intense and exciting. Remember that moment in Star Wars when Han Solo came back to help Luke blow up the Death Star. Remember how you just cheered an celebrated with the heroes? That's how this film made me feel VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS.

I'm afraid I'm not eloquent enough to describe just how much I loved this movie. While not perfect, the sum total of the parts created a great, memorable experience.

Review 2:

Great for people that have never read the comic, 25 July 2005

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [drendoynk](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I'm your average guy, I don't read comic books, and I usually don't comment about movies. Here is some thing a lot of people who gave this movie a bad review might not understand. The Fantastic 4 is a great movie!!! Especially for people who are too young to remember the comic books or the show!!! I remember when I was 9 years old, The Fantastic 4 used to be on late night on Cartoon Network. That was the only time I remember hearing about them or seeing them on a main stage.

Ten years later, a smile comes to my face when I hear about a movie being made about the superheroes I vaguely remember loving as a child. I don't read comic books. **I could care less about the comic book accuracy** NEGATIEVE KIJK TOV KUNST. **I just wanna see some guy burst into flames, fly, and say smart** comments.** CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Spiderman didn't do it for me, X-Men didn't, the only Batman movie I truly enjoyed was Batman Forever (Robin was cool, and Christian Bale didn't even act in Batman Begins.) VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS **I've never enjoyed a superhero movie more than the Fantastic 4.** CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE It's got such a simple formula: What would you do if you

woke up one morning with superpowers? Each character was real. Johnny was an adventurous guy before the accident, of course he's not going to stay cooped up in Reed's lab all day. Reed was a geek, he stayed a geek the whole movie. Sue was like... the "dude, I totally wanna do your mom" type. She was responsible and everything... and she looked so hot in that cat suit. Ben was great as the family man who goes through the trauma of losing his wife and being out-casted. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS.**

I loved the Fantastic 4 because each character goes through their own issues, but the dramatic bull**** doesn't eclipse all the awesome action. I hated Spiderman because Peter still looked like a doopy, love sick, puppy even when he was kicking some bad guy buttocks. This movie had the right balance of emotion and butt-kicking. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The actors had such great chemistry! The scene after Johnny goes to the motocross contest was priceless. It was basically: This is how you bicker with superpowers.

The scenes with the Thing adapting to life with big fingers was great. You can't just wake up one morning bigger than life and expect to be able to do everything normal. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID.** The scenes with Sue stripping down in the middle of the street were so true. Is there a better way to get away from a crowd than turning invisible and stripping off all your clothes? The little things like all of Johnny's clothes burning, the tabloids, the action figures, the way the Thing squeezed a huge bundle of oranges for his juice in the morning, all those things make this movie great.

When you see the Fantastic 4, it's like you're watching 4 people's lives change through a hidden camera. They're doing their normal, everyday stuff... except with wicked cool powers. **INTERPRETATIE VAN DE FILM**

Review 3:

Missing Something, but watchable, 25 February 2006

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

Author: [wolf632425](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

The Movie: 2 scientists, 2 pilots, and their financial backer hop in a space shuttle to go to an orbital space station to study a spacial storm that they believe is similar to the storm that hit Earth a millenia ago and sparked life on our planet. They miscalculate the direction and speed of said storm and are hit full on by it. Only the financial backer, Victor Von Doom, is behind any kind of advanced shielding. The co-pilot is out on a spacewalk, and the other 3 are just behind the outer wall. When the storm hits them, they make pretty comical poses in slow motion and appear to start floating (there was artificial gravity before the storm hit). So then we find our team back on Earth at some mountain medical resort. Although they never tell us, you can tell it's Vancouver. That's where our pilots (Johnny Storm and Ben Grimm), and our scientists (Sue Storm and Reed Richards) realize that their DNA has been "fundamentally changed". Since Grimm was on spacewalk, he had the most marked change. And unlike the other 3, he can't turn it off and on at will. The rest of the film is about them adjusting and manipulating their new powers and stopping the newly dubbed "Dr. Doom" (formerly Victor Von) from using his new powers (seems his shield didn't work so well after all) for the purposes of evil.

My take: I can't help but compare this to the Spiderman's, the X-Men, and Batman Begins, all of which were better movies with deeper characters. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** And it's funny to me that in a cast with such actors as Ioan Gruffud, Michael Chiklis, Jessica Alba, and Julian McMahon, that it's Chris Evans' electric portrayal of The Human Torch/Johnny Storm that

saves this movie. That kid brings life and energy to every scene he's in, and his comic timing is fantastic (no pun intended) FOCUS ACTEURS/TALENT. Gruffud was excellent as well, but his character was so understated that you might not have noticed. I don't blame Chiklis, a fine actor himself, for the cheesy lines he had to deliver, but my goodness couldn't they hire better writers? And believing Jessica Alba is a world class scientist is a bit of stretch. If she'd been able to deliver her lines a little less stiffly, maybe it would've been more believable. For FF2, I hope they bring in an entirely new writing team and give Alba and Chiklis lines they can handle with a lot less cheese. That being said, there were some fun scenes, almost all involving Torch/Johnny, whether he's needling Thing, or hitting on women, it's always fun to watch. HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID And the bar scene with Thing and the blind girl was very good. CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Special Effects: Excellent. They gave it top of the line effects throughout the movie. FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL

The DVD: There is a commentary track with Alba, Gruffud, and Chiklis which was more entertaining than the movie itself. You can tell they're all friends and comfortable razzing each other. You find out such things as the fact Jessica didn't like having to dress up in the skin tight space suit, although Chiklis didn't think that opinion would be shared by male viewers. We find out that the actress that Johnny goes skiing with at the beginning of the movie is actually one of Chiklis's wife's best friends. We learn that Chiklis and McMahon have always wanted to be on each other's series on F/X, and were happy to finally be able to work together on this. We also learn that Evans ad-libbed a lot of the best dialogue...he had a scene where he was staring at Thing and said "Where's your ears?"...very funny and very ad-libbed. Same thing with the "That's gross" line when Mr. Fantastic unlocked the door at the beginning of the movie. The fact that the funniest lines were ad-libbed by a 24 year old actor is another topic entirely. Gruffud would've liked to try to ad-lib, but because he had to speak in an American accent, he didn't feel comfortable doing so. There's also some sort of video diary that Alba shot while they were traveling around and promoting the film. Some of it was insightful, but it was mostly stuff I could've done without.

FF2 is going to happen, so I hope they take a long look at the critiques of this initial installment and make some changes in the writing staff, and possibly the director. Could you imagine Tony Scott directing one of these movies???

Review 4:

Are you kidding me?, 10 September 2006



Author: [TheQuietStorm](#) from Brooklyn

I don't usually take too much time on a film that I had rated with one star. So, this should be quick.

I read a few reviews and see that some of the film's fans feel that it shouldn't be taken seriously because it's a comic book film that don't take itself serious. Granted, that is the case. I realized that after seeing the Brooklyn Bridge scene. Doesn't mean such a bail out disguised as a lame excuse such as this should be given to a Hollywood production. They have more than enough necessary resources to make better films. That excuse doesn't have any validity with a true film goer like myself. This is probably the worse film of 2005, definitely the worst comic book film of all time. CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Some people compliment the acting. ARE YOU KIDDING ME? Alba along with the rest of the Fantastic Four should have been called the "OVER THE TOP POP TARTS" FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT instead. I think it could have been better with a stronger script and a better director.

The bad acting, executing awful dialogue, prevented me from believing in the world of the story GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE. Maybe it is suppose to be a fun comic book film, but that would never work if the individual viewer can't look past the campy acting.

Some people make an excuse for the writing. ARE YOU KIDDING ME? With all the writers, all they can deliver is this steaming pile? I'm surprised the studio actually thought that this script worked. It would have been slung over my shoulder, hitting the trash with the quickness. BULLSEYE! The dialogue was so on the nose. Their efforts to be funny failed every time. HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID I hated seeing how immature the characters were behaving when they were discovering their powers, which slowed the pace of the film for me. They were bickering like the siblings of "The Incredibles (a vastly superior super hero film than this turd)." Weren't these grown, educated people? I'm sorry fans. Get over it. This script doesn't work... at all. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID

Some complimented the directing. ARE YOU KIDDING ME? I mentioned the acting before. Oops... (chuckling)His bad. Not as bad as the amateurish camera work along with the poor staging of actors and extras he worked so hard to execute (Story). I didn't believe the swarm of bystanders standing around looking googly-eyed at the extraordinary things that was happening around them by the Four. The media covering the great feats played as false to me. It all felt so... fraudulent and hokey. Tim Story? REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD Your last name doesn't compliment your abilities as a storyteller. Go back to film school.

The art production sucked eggs as well. The colors were too solid. Could have benefited from the film's colors being desaturated a little. This isn't really relevant but it was just one of all the things that troubled me about this film. The whole look didn't work. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID

Lastly, some of these novice film-goers loved the special effects. ARE YOU KIDDING ME?! The special effects took the film down from a two to a one for me FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL. I hated the scene where they first were given their powers. That looked like some cheesy video game with sub-par CGIs. The best effects I had seen in this film was when the fire truck came crashing through the side of the Brooklyn Bridge. That little moment made me appreciate what I was watching for that one minute out of the film's one hundred minutes.

Also, that whole thing between THING and Kerry Washington was so stupid, clichéd and predictable that I couldn't stop throwing up.

Bottom line, I'm not giving this film an excuse just because it wasn't taking itself seriously. That's a cop-out. They could've made a better film. They were just lazy. I am too through... CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 5:

How much did I like this? Let me count the ways!, 8 July 2005



Author: [Carycomic](#) from Torrington, CT, USA

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

1) The updating of how they get their super-powers. In the comics, it was a side-effect of the Cold War's "race into space." But, the Cold War ended fifteen years ago! So, instead, the audience witnesses the fateful cosmic storm hitting a corporate version of the International Space Station CONTEXT CBA. 2) The updating of Sue Storm's personality. Instead of being Reed Richard's blindly loyal piece of arm candy (as she seemed to be in the 1960's), she is a modern woman who has just as many smarts as him. But, far more capable of showing her

emotions, when the situation calls for more than intellect. 3) The faithful rendering of Johnny and Ben's clashing personalities. The former is almost incessantly insensitive and "show-offy," especially after becoming the Human Torch **CONTEXT CBA**. And, the latter's heartbreak at being rejected by his fiancé'--while everyone else is applauding him for saving that firetruck--was so convincing, everyone in the audience who saw this with me gave a collective "Awww!" **ONTROERING** *If Michael Chiklis isn't one of the nominees for Best Supporting Actor, at next year's Oscars, I'm changing channels **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**.* 4) Last, but not least? Julian McMahon outdoes the great job he did as "Cole" on CHARMED. Where that character could arouse sympathy in 49% of the show's viewership, as Victor Von Doom, he arouses none! You love to hate him, and don't feel guilty about doing so. I think this is partially due to portraying him as a ruthless techno-businessman. Something that was done, quite successfully, to the post-1985 Lex Luthor at Marvel Comics' Distinguished Competition. *A direct lift-cum-homage, perhaps?* My only complaint is the way Dr. Doom was given his armored look. Instead of it being a robotic exo-skeleton, it's depicted as more of a mutation. One that makes him resemble a sort of Colossus/Magneto hybrid! So, that's why I only award this movie eight-out-of-ten points. It's not perfect. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** But, it's definitely **FAN-DIRTY-WORD-TASTIC!** **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

5 User generated reviews: Sin City

Review 1:

Bold, Brilliant and Totally Badass, 18 March 2005



Author: [zardoz74_2000](#) from United States

With Hellboy, Guillermo Del Toro lovingly recreated panels from artist/creator Mike Mignola's comic book stories and brought them to vibrant life, setting a new benchmark for adaptations that respect their source material. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** With Sin City, however, co-directors Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller **REGISSEUR BENOEMD** have done more than just recreate the brutal chiaroscuro of Miller's stark post-modern noir artwork, **CONNECTIE HIGH-ART** they've captured the essence and the aesthetic of Basin City (as much a character as Marv or Hartigan) **COMPLEXITEIT/ AMBIGUÏTEIT** and brought its universe and characters to a stunning three-dimensional life. **GEBRUIK HIGH_ART TERMEN – SUBTILITEIT/ GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** And unlike Hellboy, which suffered from a weak, confusing script, Sin City weaves a Pulp Fiction-esque narrative which snakes through the dark streets and crooked alleyways of this hellish metropolis like a fever dream.

In short, Sin City delivers a blistering ballet of bullets and blood, dames and danger at every turn. **It's a kinetic masterpiece of pop culture for the new millennium** **GEBRUIK HIGH-ART TERMEN** (and a case could be made that this was the movie that CGI was invented for). **FOCUS ELEMENT SPEKTAKEL**

As a Frank Miller fan for over 25 years, I know his work and I know Sin City – and this Sin City will knock your socks off whether you are a fan or a newcomer to the dark delights of his devilish imagination and brutal style. **Exceeding my expectations on all levels, this movie ranks as one of the most enjoyable cinema-going experiences I've had in years.** **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Everything works here. From Rodriguez's cinematography and editing, to the seamless direction **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** (no mean feat when you consider Robert co-directed with Miller and Quentin Tarantino joined the mix as "Special Guest Director"), to the spot-on casting. The script gives Bruce Willis, Mickey Rourke, Clive Owen and Benicio Del Toro plenty of opportunity to chew the scenery – and they do, especially Rourke, who, despite having his mug buried under a thick layer of gruesome latex, delivers one of the best performances of his career and steals the show as Marv, the giant thug with a broken heart **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. The ladies hold their own, too. Jessica Alba, Rosario Dawson, Brittany Murphy and Jaime King are all great in their roles, particularly Dawson as machine gun-wielding Dominatrix/Hooker-Godmother Gail. And kudos to Elijah Wood (proving there is life after Hobbits) and Nick Stahl who deliver contrasting performances as vile villains, the ultra-creepy Kevin and the disgusting Yellow bastard, respectively.

Sin City is smart, stylish, sexy and sick. **It's also violent and funny** **HUMOR/GRAPPGHEID**. **Certainly not a film for the whole family, but for those of us who enjoy our movies rated R, this flick kicks the head and the gut like a mule.** **VOORSPELLING REACTIE VAN HET PUBLIEK**

Here's hoping Sin City makes a mint, for there are 10,000 stories in the naked (sinful) city, and this is but a handful of them. I'm already praying for a sequel.

A picture perfect "ten" for this cineast.

Review 2:

Quite Possibly the Most Accurate Comic Adaptation. Ever., 17 March 2005



Author: [SteakTheCow](#) from Minneapolis

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

Sin City in its original serialized comic form was everything that one would expect from the then well known artist/writer/creator Frank Miller and more. Many would come to say that it is his best work **CONTEXT CBA**.

For years it was a world that only existed on paper in black and white with splashes of color, but it was enough to make Sin City live and breath in ways that few others in the medium have ever been able to come close to. Because Miller's dark, noir overtones painted a very clear, and fully realized picture of every seedy back alley and strip club, and cheap motel room in the fictional Basin City it became painfully obvious that it was just too visceral a place to ever be real in a way that could be encapsulated on film, or at least we, including Miller himself, thought. **CONTEXT CBA** We were wrong.

This is THE comic movie we have been waiting for and it does not disappoint from the first overly dramatic voice-over to the last frame of the credit scroll. Telling three tales from Miller's world (The Hard Goodbye, The Big Fat Kill, and That Yellow Bastard) the comic transitions from paper to cellulose flawlessly and believably with a grace seldom seen **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID- GEBRUIK HIGHART TERMEN**. This ease is especially incredible for something so over the top and stylized like this that it's almost hard to imagine that these are the actors you've grown to know and love for years. But they are and it all comes together beautifully.

The cast, crew, and artists involved in making this adaptation a reality should be commended for their service to the idea that a true comic book movie can, in fact, be made without making concessions to the masses **NEGATIEVE KIJK OP POPULAIRE CULTUUR**, without altering the plot or changing the characters, and still manage to retain the feel that the ink on paper had while creating a truly entertaining film **ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE**. Much of this film's success can be directly contributed to the fantastic casting job which encompasses an incredibly long list of a-list and up and coming celebs plus a few obscure but cult favorites (yes, I'm talking to you Rutger) and the tag team direction of Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez. Rodriguez should be particularly touted for pushing Miller to finally do this project, and for leading the way to make this the film that Miller always wanted it to be and that Rodriguez knew he could make. **REGISSEUR BENOEMD**

While I do have a few nit-picky points of contention with cut dialog or certain actors/actresses that refused to bare it all for the sake of keeping intact every last detail from the books it doesn't change the fact that what was laid out on the polyester film stock before me was every bit as entertaining as the original works, and it made a pretty darn good flick to boot. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** If it's not already self-evident, the bar has been raised for the comic movie. The next brave soul willing to venture in had better be prepared to take on Sin City.

Review 3:

Miller's art realized in fast paced nice film noir tribute., 18 June 2005

★★★★★★★★☆☆

Author: [mstomaso](#) from Vulcan

I'll put my bottom line at the top so you can decide whether to read on. I can't recommend this film to the average cinema-goer. Instead, I will recommend it to those who are fans of Frank Miller, film noir, Robert Rodrigues, and to a lesser extent Quentin Tarantino **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**. This is also not a film for feminists. Others should read on and decide if this is something they want to see.

The fact that Frank Miller was listed with Robert Rodriguez as co-director of this film **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**, and the cleverly ambiguous film noir trailer hooked me **CONNECTIE POPULAIRE CULTUUR**. So, the spouse and I went to see it shortly after release, expecting exactly what we got - a very cleverly and interestingly shot **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT** film noir version of several Frank Miller stories **GEBRUIK HIGH-ART TERMEN** taking place in Basin City, the locus of Miller's graphic novels of the same name as the film.

Quentin Tarantino guest directs one of the segments. I'm not sure which - Rodrigues' style is as often violent, but a bit more comic. Based on some of the ridiculous violence of the film, I think it likely that QT had some influence on the other segments as well. **My only objection to this film is really the quantity of absurd and frankly grotesque violence scenes.**

POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR Though the violence is true to Miller's work, seeing it as a process creates a very different effect than Miller's art. Fortunately, Rodrigues' sense of humor also prevails in most of the most violent scenes. The use of colorization emphasizes the film's bloodiness through the only colors used in the film - red, ultra-white and yellow - comic exaggeration and a wonderfully **eerie noir feel**. **SPANNING/SUSPENS**

Predictably, this is a very dark film, and quite a bit more disturbing than the average commercial stuff. **NEGATIEVE KIJK TOV POP CULTUUR**

What the spouse and I didn't expect was pleasantly surprising - **one of the most artistically well done interpretations of the comic medium I have yet seen (and I have seen them all)**

GEBRUIK HIGH ART TERMEN and stand-out performances by Del Toro, Mickey Rourke and Willis. I expect nothing less from Del Toro, **but I have to admit Rourke just blew me away as Miller's phenomenally ugly and invincible tough guy – Marv** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** - who decides, for once, to do something good with his life. Rourke's character is played with such empathy that you won't want his segments to end - you will want him to become the final hero of the film. I was less enchanted with Clive Owen's portrayal of Dwight. Though this segment was good entertainment, I thought Owen could have given a more emotive performance. Elijah Wood was exceptionally creepy and well cast in his very brief role.

All of the heroic male characters (and this film is VERY much filmed from a stereotype film noir male point of view) have one common characteristic - they are all very tough critters fighting against all odds against endemic corruption, murder and injustice, but not at all afraid to indulge in it to further their own ends. The vignettes are loosely but satisfactorily connected. **But the plots are less important than the way the film FEELS.** **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** The film mixes hopelessness with fearlessness and fatalism to the extent that you'll feel like an honorable death ending a brief life is far more appealing than a lengthy life devoid of self-respect. It's a really well done homage to Comic Book as an art form, and the film noir motif. Whoever thought of putting Rodriguez and Miller together on this one deserves a nod from fans of both genres.

Review 4:

Reprehensible piece of trash, 3 April 2005



Author: oshram@aol.com from Cleveland

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

Sin City is a film geek's dream, all style and violence, an homage not only to the comics that spawned them but to Tarantino-esque gore and violence; it's even shot in black and white, features 'edgy' story material, anti-heroes, and gratuitous amounts of attractive female flesh. **I'm sure the internet film geeks have already erected a shrine to this film.** **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK** But unlike them, I have not come to praise Miller (or really Rodriguez), but to

bury him.

Rodriguez does, in fact, manage the near impossible feat of capturing Miller's noir style in an interesting way. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** I was worried that what worked for the comics wouldn't work for the movies, but Rodriguez **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** pulls it off. Sin City looks like its graphic antecedents, and the sparse use of spot color echoes Miller's style and carries much of the same impact. While Miller's people rarely resemble real humans any more (except the always curvaceous women), I felt most of the casting was good too. Mickey Rourke is hidden behind a thick layer of prosthetics as one of the main characters, Marv, but it somehow actually works in the film. I think probably I liked Bruce Willis' Hartigan the best, but then I liked his story arc the most as well.

The problem, sadly, is not with the visuals, where I thought it would be. The problem isn't even with the storytelling **POSITIEF/ NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** – although the narrative voices of the characters are so monotonous and so similar that you more or less lose track of who's doing what to who because they all speak with the same burned-out hard-ass gravelly self-deprecating voice. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** The problem is simply that the shorthand Miller used in the comics does not translate well to the screen, at all **CONTEXT CBA**. Sin City on the page is a violent, dirty place, and it is so in the movie; but the insanely high level of sadism is far less shocking on the page than it is on the screen. Sin City plays like a two hour seminar in violence desensitization; every single imaginable physical cruelty – from eye-gouging to castration, from severed limbs to bullwhipping, to a lot, lot more – is played out in stark black and white. **NEGATIEVE KIJK TOV POPULAIRE CULTUUR** As if that weren't bad enough – and if you think it's not, you have bigger issues than I do, friend – what makes it even worse is that the film revels in the violence. In the comics, when these lunks go off to commit their mayhem, while they throw themselves into it, there's always an undertow of regret to it, of resignation, of knowing what they do damns them. But here, the committing of acts of unspeakable violence somehow seem to justify and redeem the characters; the more disgusting things you do in the name of revenge, the greater a hero you are. **INTERPRETATIE** I cannot think of a single message more repugnant or reprehensible to send.

To me Sin City, while perhaps an interesting visual exercise (though honestly I wasn't that captivated), is little more than an excuse to show blood and boobs for two hours. I could get the same thing with a little less style (and maybe Joan Severance instead of Jessica Alba) from a direct-to-video shlocker that at least knew it was a borderline snuff film and didn't have the pretensions to art **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. Sin City is two hours of repetitive, relentless sadism, wrapped up in an artsy package. With all that talent, with all the effort and work (and it's there), it's a shame they managed to miss the underlying message in all of Miller's comics – that the descent into this lifestyle can only end one way, and it's not good. **CONTEXT CBA** The very heart, as it were, of Miller's message in the books, completely missing from the film. Rodriguez got all the trappings right, he just sort of missed the point. But so, then, did most of the fans.

Review 5:

A Solid Film School Project, 24 August 2005



Author: [writing_ink](#) from United States

Sin City opens with a scene between Bruce Willis and Michael Madsen - two actors that aren't among the greatest talents that Hollywood has to offer, but two actors whom I enjoy and who are capable of more than just holding their own in the right role. And this should have been the right role for both of them. Dark. Gritty. Crime-ridden. Willis as a golden-hearted, tough-minded beat cop and Madsen as a much darker version of the same. Unfortunately, my first thought was, "Madsen isn't even acting. He's just standing there, reading his lines."

What's up? He really sucks **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT!**" And my second thought, which was repeatedly endlessly throughout what I can only loosely define as a "film" was, "Okay... These are some pretty solid actors. At some point, this movie has to get better." It never did.

To the makers of Sin City, I want a refund. You owe me \$3 and the two hours of my life I lost enduring this total piece of drek. Had I known going in how outrageously bad this entire film was going to be from start to finish, I would have picketed the video store with a large placard that said, "**Sin City is Spy Kids with boobs and violence VERGELIJKING FILMS** - only not as good as that sounds." At some point, an actor actually has to act. The monotone delivery of lines has it's place, but should not be used in every scene by every actor in the movie. (Thank you, Brittany Murphy, for actually emoting **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT!**) This was the first film I have ever seen where every single major character thinks that they're the narrator. What in the hell were you thinking? And yet, in the midst of what was a plot less collection of short-stories masquerading as a movie, tucked among what were universally horrendous performances by Willis, Madsen, Michael Clarke Duncan (who was completely miscast) and the like, Mickey Rourke (of all people), pulls a heck of a turn as steel-jawed Marv out of a hat and makes his portion of this incredibly disjointed movie, not only bearable, but enjoyable **COMPLEXITEIT/ AMBIGUÏTEIT- CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. You felt for Marv. You wanted him to succeed, the dark, sick, potentially mentally unstable killer that he was **ONTROERING**. Marv had a motivation for what he did. You understood his love for Goldie and how it could push him to seek retribution for her death, even if Marv had only known her for a matter of hours. Rourke's turn as Marv was that subtle and nuanced, even when deeply submerged in unbridled violence. Unfortunately, that was the true tragedy of the film. Rourke's performance gave you just enough hope that the movie would improve and become somewhat palatable that you were able to summon enough courage to suffer through all the way to the end. **FOCUS ACTEURS/TALENT**

Grade: D-plus (And it would have been an "F" but at least the visuals were interesting **FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL** - and Rourke's performance alone is worth raising this thing an entire grade). But as a final note to the directors (yes, that's plural - Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez shared the title of Director while Quentin Tarantino co-directed **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**), comic books should be adapted to movies. Movies should not be moving comic books. The visual concept was interesting for the first ten minutes of the film and then was just annoying **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. Audiences actually enjoy films that are more than line drawings with a single splash of color thrown in for effect. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**

5 User generated reviews: Superman Returns

Review 1:

Strong Potential/Weak Execution!, 28 June 2006



Author: [b_flic](#) from New Jersey

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

Bryan Singer REGISSEUR BENOEMD has made it no secret that he was going to make this film a sequel of sorts to the first two Superman films which starred Christopher Reeve. Which I thought was an interesting idea even though I thought Superman 2 was lame. However, I thought the premise of Superman returning after a long absence was a great idea, unfortunately Singer's heavy reliance on the first two films really crippled this film.

Some minor film details are included in my comments below which may hint at spoilers...

I attended a screening of Superman Returns last night, and even though I'm not the biggest Superman fan, I was REALLY looking forward to seeing this film. I have to admit I had misgivings about the casting of Kate Bosworth and Brandon Routh because there were too young. However Brandon Routh was the BEST Superman yet and Kate Bosworth really did very well as Lois Lane. Kevin Spacey was GREAT as Lex Luthor, especially when he and Routh (briefly) shared the screen. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT However Parker Posey was wasted in a dull cliché.

The opening credit sequence was amazing. Hearing the original Superman theme gave me chills CONNECTIE POPULAIRE CULTUUR. The next 45 minutes of the film were awesome. Lex's reintroduction demonstrates at his ruthlessness even on a smaller scale. Clark Kent/Superman's return home was thoughtful and well done, as was the reintroduction to the crew at the Daily Planet.

However, because Singer assumes that we all saw the first two films he apparently does not feel the need to develop any of the characters outside of Superman and Lois POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR. Lex Luthor's character is just a caricature of a mustache twirling villain, and even though Spacey does this very well, it's hard to take him seriously as a threat. His "evil" plan is nothing more than a rehash of Gene Hackman's Lex Luthor the 1978 film except using crystals instead of nukes. There is NO REAL logic behind his motives at all if you think about it. More importantly you just don't care if he succeeds or not VOORSPELLING REACTIE VAN HET PUBLIEK - ONTROERING. Lex Luthor's character is only validated in the very brief face to face confrontation with Superman at the end.

Let me say that Lex/Superman confrontation at the end is one of the BEST scenes in the whole film and further proof of wasted potential. Lex Luthor shows how truly evil he can be, and again Spacey does an amazing job here FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. The on screen presence of Brandon Routh and Kevin Spacey together was SO good. Routh could really hold his own next to Spacey. Too bad Singer couldn't have found a way to elaborate on this scene or do something more interesting with the characters than just having Luther (figuratively) twirl his mustache and have Superman pine over Lois Lane the whole film.

Overall, this film is bound in a weak story with plot holes big enough to drive a truck through. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID The story relies too heavily on the Superman/Lois Lane love story so much so that the rest of the film, and the other characters, just feel like an after thought.

Review 2:

Superman Returns sure wasn't fun to watch., 30 June 2006



Author: [Encyclopedia Brown](#) from Hollywood, CA

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I guess this movie is a fitting tribute to the first Superman film, as it is just as crummy and painfully long as the original.

After an opening scene consisting solely of murky intergalactic visuals, the credits pay homage to the even-crummy-looking-for-their-time futuristic sweeping credits of the original Superman film. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Then there is some more murky stuff. Ma Kent sees some kind of murky ruckus on the farm, and spends a good portion of my life slowly walking up to some debris in the cornfield. Then Superman sneaks up on her and faints.

Next we catch up with Lex Luthor in a scene about many murky close-ups of an old lady as she dies. We don't see Luthor's face until the end of the scene, an early instance of the film's drive to leave no hackneyed stone unturned. Lex Luthor is a guy who doesn't like Superman because he is not human. Also, he probably doesn't like humans either, as the movie occasionally features some kind of plot about Lex Luthor planning to kill most of Earth's population. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

After a while, Clark Kent shows up back at his old job (I forgot to mention, he had been away on a five year trip where nothing happened). **Then he finds out Lois Lane has an illegitimate kid and is dating Cyclops** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. It upsets him so much that he loses control of his super strength to such an extent that he accidentally breaks a picture frame.

At this point we see that Miss Lane is on some kind of jet attached to some kind of space shuttle. It is some kind of important event on account of it is on television. Then we learn that there are people in a control room monitoring this event. There are also people watching it on television and there are pilots in the cockpit. The film then reminds us that these people are involved by cutting between them for most of the summer.

As the events leading up to the inevitable disaster started to build, I excused myself to get a soda. I accidentally walked back into the wrong theater and watched that movie about Al Gore showing slides in its entirety. I tried to find my way back to Superman Returns, but I somehow wandered into Prairie Home Companion, which I watched twice in a row. Then it was time to stop messing around.

I walked back into the first theater, found my seat, and looked up to see that the impending Lois Lane space shuttle disaster was almost upon us. Still, it seemed to be taking forever, so I wandered around the theater, met a girl, got married, raised a son and sent him off to college. While attending my son's medical school graduation, I remembered that I should probably check in on Superman Returns, so I excused myself and raced back to the theater only to learn there was no need to hurry. It still took about another half hour before things went wrong for Space Shuttle Lane. When they did, Superman saved everybody, which was pretty cool.

. And then there is a subplot where Superman turns really creepy and starts stalking Lois Lane and her family with his x-ray vision and super-hearing. Then he tries to get her to cheat on Cyclops, who seems like a good guy.

Meanwhile, Lex Luthor is involved in some kind of contest to display every possible generic

villain behavior before the end of the movie. I forgot to bring my scorecard home with me (they give you one at the door), but I think he scored damn close to one hundred percent. I hope he wins the million dollars.

At this point, things start to gear up for the big murky finale. I think maybe the projector was broken, on account of the movie seemed to be in some kind of loop for a while here. I remember seeing murky things growing out of the water, Superman getting sick, Superman getting better, back to the murky things, he's sick again, no wait, he's okay again.

Then Lex Luthor unleashed his final bad guy move: yelling at his girlfriend a little bit.

Then Superman died and came back to life. I thought the movie was over, so I left.

Ninety years later, the nursing home where I lived felt a little chilly. I realized I left my sweatshirt back in the theater, and I went to retrieve it. When I did, I was slightly surprised to find that Superman Returns wasn't over yet. I tried to ask some of the viewers what I missed, but most of them were only skeletons with long gray beards by now.

I sat back in my old seat and watched as Lois Lane pattered around her house for a while. Then Superman showed up and started quoting the beginning of the movie, and since I already saw that part I thought it was okay to leave.

So that is my review of Superman Returns.

Oh, also, if you like jokes about people eating dogs or jokes about one dog eating another dog, you will love this movie. On account of there are two jokes like that in it. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**

Review 3:

It's okay, but FAR from great thanks to weak script, 30 June 2006

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

Author: [Joseph Stachler](#) from Chicago, IL

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I saw the original "Superman: The Movie" when it was released in theaters. It was an epic event. It would be unfair to expect the same from "Superman Returns" but the filmmakers are inviting comparisons since they rely so much on certain events that occurred in the first two films, even going so far as to reuse some of Tom Mankiewicz's dialog. It's obvious when watching the film that a lot of money and hard work went into making it...with the exception of the screen writing which is where this film falls short. It insists on making several characters dumber than they would appear. Take Richard, concerned about an old article Lois wrote called "I spent the night with Superman". Richard boy, she has a kid. She obviously spent the night with SOMEONE before she met you. **If you really stop and consider it, every character in the film is basically commanded by the script to do something kind of dumb in order to advance the unimaginative story.** **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Perry White assigns Clark Kent the task of looking into a mysterious blackout. At no time in the film is it remotely hinted that he has been doing anything of the sort (or anything at all, when you think about it), whereas Lois in defiance of White is seen in several scenes looking into it, and it becomes a major plot point. Meanwhile Kent (Superman, mind you) is dopping around the office.

The powers of Superman are well known. And writers can have a lot of fun being resourceful

with them. But not in this film. Everything Superman does is predictable. By comparison think back on the way Superman saved California after the bomb struck. Things like having the train run across his back in part 1 or freezing the lake with his breath then dropping it on an out-of-control fire in part 3 are what I'm talking about. VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS

The music wisely incorporates John Williams classic score, but a lot of cues are overused, especially "Can You Read My Mind?" which has little place in this film considering the tepid relationship between Superman and Lois. It could have been used to great effect just once, when she visits an unconscious Superman in the hospital, where everything she feels for him comes to the surface. Instead, we're hit over the head with it practically every time they run into each other. ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE

I thought Luthor's plot had interesting promise. But I find it puzzling that after his test run in the Atlantic Ocean Metropolis is basically now literally standing on shaky ground, and the skyscrapers all have questionable structural integrity after the shock-wave ran through them, shaking the foundations to the point that all the windows shattered in every building and even the Daily Planet's iconic sculpture topples from atop the building.

Director Singer REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD certainly subscribes to Richard Donner's VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS "verisimilitude" approach to the first film, the lack of which is what killed the series in the 80s. I like Brandon Routh as Superman and Kevin Spacey as Lex Luthor. You could recast everyone else for all I care. Kate Bosworth is a walking pot of boiling water. Feisty and headstrong are one thing, but i think they pushed that too far in this film. Why in hell is Richard or Clark/Superman attracted to her?

I've noticed a lot of people, hungry for this film to come out, are satisfied with the product. If this review has a low "helpful" score it's because they are blindly supporting the film VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK. This review was written for anyone who knows how to discern between quality and quantity, particularly when it comes to film. I so very much wanted to love this film. Hollywood studios have a way of systematically destroying every decent franchise they get their hands on. In spite of my relative disappointment of the movie, it's far from being horrible. It's just not great...like it should have been.

Review 4:

Give it a minute to sink in, 5 July 2006



Author: [joshuabrandon](#) from United States

First off don't take advice on whether or not to see this movie from someone who didn't like the original film, doesn't know how to spell kal-el, and/or thinks Smallville is the only good representation of the superman story. Don't get me wrong I like smallville. I watch it all season because the writers will give me at least 3 very good episodes...but thats out of an entire season. That leaves a lot of crappy episodes too. That being said Tom Welling is great and Michael Rosenbaum is the best Lex I've ever seen. On to this movie... The casting is genius. Brandon Routh is amazing...not only does he capture the role of Superman perfectly. He recaptures the Clark that Christopher Reeves showed us FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Its almost uncanny you'll see what I mean. The story line is where everyone gets hung up, but you just have to give it a chance. You have to look at it this way. Singer REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD had the choice of whether or not to show us the same story we've all seen before or to come with something totally new. And thats what He did he brought us a story we haven't seen before we don't automatically know how this will end or even where he is going with it in the next film. But thats good. With Hollywood overrun with remakes and regurgitated story lines its exciting to NOT know where this is going. Another complaint you might hear is the pace. "Its not as action packed as spiderman 2 or x-men 2 it didn't live up to potential". For this answer

you have to remember X-men 1. Singer likes to build a base storyline to work with. X-men 1 was not near as action packed as the 2nd one. But he built the characters VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS. I feel like that's what he did in this film. He works a little character development in. It does slow up the pace and make the movie a little long. ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS But I think overall the next film will benefit from it. So I would definitely recommend seeing this film...maybe not the latest showing VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK. But it's the first must see of the summer. I'm ready to see it again already

Review 5:

A Cheesy Disappointment., 28 June 2006



Author: [demers8687](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

The sense of disappointment most people felt watching Catwoman a while back is likely to deepen with this fifth installment in the Superman series VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS, which now lands in theatres with a resounding artistic thud GEBRUIK HAT. After the fun and freshness of the original—which treated its fun, if rather silly, premise with a sort of tongue-in-cheek quality as well as considerable energy—this follow up proved far too bloated and self-important, suggesting that the writers/director took themselves much too seriously SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. Worse, they took that tongue-in-cheek original film too seriously. What's really sad is the fact that the movie borders on a parody of the original Superman without realizing it. DIRECT lines from the original movie are used. "Statistically, flying..." "You shouldn't smoke Miss Lane." "You know what my father said to me...Get out." This wasn't homage, it was a retreat.

I guess you could live with the nostalgia if the cheese wasn't so very excessive AND it wasn't so very unoriginal ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE AND most of the film wasn't so very dull CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. Everything screamed "cheesy comic book movie" right from the start. From the extremely fake CGI jumps FOCUS ALEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL of young Clark to the touch down of the plane inside of a baseball stadium to Lex's over-the-top ham job, it just reeked of cheese. I honestly can't name another film or even a remake that was this unoriginal. They didn't continue the story, they just rehashed it. All they did was replace nuclear warheads with stolen Kryptonian crystals, switched out the bimbo eye candy with a conscience and added a love interest for Lois. During the rare action sequences, there was no sense of awe or danger. The scene that best illustrates this was the giant gun sequence. Forgetting the fact that there was no need for these criminals to erect a giant gun on the top of a building, what was the point? What hurts the character (and thus any director's efforts) is the fact that Superman is just too mighty. Watching high caliber bullets bounce off Superman is old hat. Watching a bullet bounce off his eyeball may be new but it creates an instant disconnect with the viewer. Ultimately, you have to wonder why Superman strains to lift half a yacht but can fling an island in to space with Kryptonite wedged in his side. The character is too uneven and this movie suffered for it. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID

Also, you have the ultimate Boy Scout wrestling with things that would qualify this movie as a chick flick. Honestly, besides a few flying sequences, where's the action and where's the drama? Superman Returns will probably make enough money to merit a sequel. I can only hope that they try to advance and humanize the character and for God sake hold the cheese in the next one.

5 online reviews: 300

review 1:

Chills!, 13 March 2007



Author: [deadmonkeys](#) from Ottawa, Ontario

After I saw the teaser for 300 I knew I HAD to see this movie! **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** From then on I avoided all other previews, reviews, etc. as not to influence my expectations of the movie. I then went into the theater on opening night with no knowledge of the plot... only that it had something to do with Greeks and Frank Miller! Ignorance is bliss! I was absolutely blown away. I'm a 26 yr old female who generally doesn't watch violent films... but I found the battle scenes so well done and breath taking **FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL**. I had chills and goosebumps virtually the entire film **ONTROERING**. I'm with many other reviewers, who felt like they had to contain themselves from shouting "yeah!" at times. Maybe I'm crazy, but I thought the whole movie was very sexy and passionate, whether it was the sex scene, a battle scene, or Leonidis addressing his men.

I think it is a shame that so many people are condemning this movie for its historical inaccuracies, or its "racism **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**", etc. People are reading far too into this movie. Whatever happened to enjoying a movie simply because it is entertaining and pleasing to the eye **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**? Don't people watch movies anymore to escape from the daily grind of life? I know I'm not as well spoken as many who have posted here. I just think this was a fantastic movie. I didn't go see it to learn anything! I just wanted to be entertained! And boy was I!

Review 2:

Much worse than the trailer, 10 March 2007



Author: [EdWont](#) from Youngstown, Ohio

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

In a word: disappointment.

I was one of the fanboys who loved the graphic novel, and watched the trailer on repeat for months **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. I'm half Greek and love action and comics, so I was superbly amped. Sadly, the movie fell so short of the mark that I was immediately reminded of how I felt after watching Star Wars: Episode I for the first time **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. I left it thinking, "I liked it? It was good? Right?" But I knew that it wasn't. Here are some of the ups and downs.

Let's start with what's good in the feature. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** The battle scenes are spectacular. **FOCUS ELEMENTEN SPEKTAKEL** The choreography didn't hinge on

speed as much as it relied on visually stunning, artistic brutality (it sounds like an oxymoron, but it applies in this context) **GEBRUIK HAT**. The timing during these scenes was unique, too. The motion sped up and slowed down in a way that really complimented the film. Of course, the entire movie is a mindblowing visual experience: **The art direction and cinematography were stunning** **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. This is especially true of the costuming and "creature" effects. My favorite aspect of the art direction was this profound grittiness (manifested in the dirt, bloodshed, contrast, and other details that were brought forth because of the filming technique) that almost became a character in itself, contributing to the harshness of the plot. All these things were simply standout. **CONNECTIE HOGERE KUNST**

Now, for the reasons I gave this film 3 out of 10 stars. The plot aspect of this film was practically nonexistent. In terms of character development, not only was it predictable, but almost tragic that they didn't pursue other avenues **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. I especially mean this when referring to the Queen Gorgo subplot that wasn't bound by Miller's original concept **CONTEXT CBA**. There were a variety of plot holes including, but not limited to, the end of Gorgo's subplot in which it's revealed that a traitor was carrying evidence of his crimes on him for what we can assume was the entire movie, when there's no plausible reason as to why he'd be carrying the evidence. Given the precious little plot in the film, it's sad to say that any plot holes exist. The acting was pretty terrible, spare the less demanding guttural shouting of the Spartan warriors, but I can't really fault the actors given that the writing was so, so painfully bland **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Even when there was a "rallying, morale boosting" speech, as is a staple for these films, it was so upsettingly cliché **ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE** that I found it agitating to watch. What was most troubling was that the entire movie was seasoned in an all-to-blatant hyper-nationalism. It was hard to enjoy this film without examining it from a modern context because of the frequent use of the word "freedom. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**" It was being thrown around like it was conservative talk radio. At one point one of the characters even said, "freedom isn't free." I have no problem if filmmakers wish to make patriotism a theme in their film (indeed, the historic events lend nicely to such a theme). However, they did it so straight-forwardly that it dumbed the movie down a great deal. And yes, the Spartans founded the term "laconic" but they were at least witty. Had it been more subtle or brought about in a more refined way (as opposed to the hero simply spouting about freedom and its virtues repeatedly throughout the film) then it probably would've contributed a great deal to the movie **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**.

All in all, this has a lot to offer in terms of eye-candy. But, it has so little substance that it's aggravating to watch. Something didn't click, and it's apparent. It feels like they could've done more with it. That's why it's aggravating. That's why it's a disappointment.

Review 3:

A great movie! **ENTERTAINMENTVARING** 21 May 2007



Author: [shoukanmahou](#) from United States

It seems that everyone who hated this movie must have written a review, so I thought I'd throw in my two cents to even things up a bit. First, if you assume every movie is made simply to uppercute some sort of ideology into the audience's chest, then yes, it does seem very racist, xenophobic, and the like. **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT** However, this film is based on a freakin' comic book! The Spartans were some of the most skilled, nastiest, nationalistic fighters out there, and certainly had reason to be more driven and nationalistic than Persia's, which was not an army of individuals fighting for their land and families **CONTEXT CBA**. Should they have been portrayed differently simply to satisfy the current political climate? Are you mad? **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** The cheesy one-liners are also evidence that this movie IS BASED ON A COMIC BOOK. The exaggerated characters is further evidence that this movie IS BASED ON A COMIC BOOK **CONTEXT CBA**. This is not a historical movie, it is a movie which seeks to put a rockstar, no-holds-barred spin on a particular historical event. It isn't attempting to be accurate, or balanced, or anything of the sort, and it SHOULD'N'T, because that isn't its purpose. It shouldn't be obligated to do anything of the sort. It's ENTERTAINMENT. Nothing more. And it's damn good entertainment, in my opinion. **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**

Every scene is beautifully crafted **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. I found the slowdown to be **stylistic** **FOCUS ELEMENTEN VAN SPEKTAKEL- GEBRUIK HAT** and much of the dialogue, which is apparently cheesy and fascist to everyone else, to be at least somewhat inspiring, and certainly engaging **PARTICIPATIE**. These Spartans were trained their entire lives to be warriors, their entire culture is built around success in battle, and you don't expect them to be quite skilled, much more so than a slave army, and quite patriotic? Also, this movie was from the point of view of the Spartans **INTERPRETATIE**. How would this army have appeared to the Spartans? Wouldn't their stories now be over-exaggerated, over-simplified, almost legendary? There isn't a great amount of character development because this movie is about a battle **ONTWIKKELING VAN KARAKTERS**, ONE battle, THE battle for the continuance of the Western world, and yes, IF the Spartans had been simply overwhelmed from the start, and if their Athenian allies hadn't completely CRUSHED the much larger Persian navy at sea, the West simply could not have existed in any similar manner as it has. And yes, the Western world is guilty of arrogance, overextending its boundaries to the point of imperialism, however, it has given our world a plethora of all-too-important philosophical ideals that are simply irreplaceable if we want to live in a free society. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

I realize I spent a great deal of my time being critical of other reviews, so I would like to take the time to apologize for perhaps wasting the time of someone who was simply searching for a detailed point of view on the film. I can assure you that the film is action-packed **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. The scenes are absolutely beautiful, every one of them **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**. The film is gory, but artistically gory, if that makes any sense. You'll know what I mean. The story is simple, direct, and inspiring **ONTROERING**. The acting is excellent. The movie, overall, was a tremendous experience. I give it a 9.

Review 4:

The Worst of All, 19 March 2007



Author: [totoujoon](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

The movie sucks ENTERTAINMENTVARING. Just because a movie contains blood and killing people does not mean it is a good movie. The Warner Brothers had to apologize for such a disaster on filming industry to Persian community CONNECTIE POP CUTLUUR. People please open your eyes! This movie was an absolute political movie who was just trying to show Persians violent and aggressive based on current issues we have with them CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK. If you read the history you will out that Persian were the most civilized people in their time CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK. Yes, it was based on a comic novel but WHY? CONTEXT CBA Why didn't they make the history alive? Wouldn't it be more interesting? At least we could all learn something instead of leaving the theaters with a bad memory of "Persian Empire". If some one does not know anything about the Persian history, they should not watch this loony because it is a piece of trash.

Review 5:

Cinematic Break-through GEBRUIK HAT after "The Matrix VERGELIJKING FILMS", 17 April 2010



Author: [Jonny Fendi](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

The storyline is simple ENTERTAINMENTVARING, but the visual and action is a revolutionary breakthrough CONNECTIE HOGERE KUNST- FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. It's very rare to found a movie that could deliver such a new acceptable method. Last time, we amazed by "Matrix" on 1999 VERGELIJKING FILMS. Apparently, the method of process making will be followed by other movies. 300 based on noir comic by Frank Miller. Miller's creations like usual always fill by darkness realism, blood, and beautiful battle-artwork CONTEXT CBA. Miller also known as mastermind of "Sin City" and Batman's "The Dark knight" CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR. The movie directed by Zack Snyder REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD. Snyder is successful combines his imagination with nowadays special effects technology. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL The result is amazing ENTERTAINMENTVARING, the movie is like one painted screen by professional painter CONNECTIE HOGERE KUNST. The lighting and shadowing are mesmerizing. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID Stars by middle class performer, such as: Gerard Butler,

Lena Headey, etc. The plot, actually I think is based on recent issue
COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT. It's about Rome Spartans defends on a Persian's aggression.
Indirectly, it reflects on 9-11 incident **INTERPRETATIE**. But also thiz could be just a coincidence.
The ending (Spoiler Alert!), King Leonidas and his 300 warriors die in the battle. But I very much
understand the essence. The essence is the struggling, which is more divine than the victory
itself. **INTERPRETATIE** The movie like thiz always has a similar end, exp: "Braveheart", "Gladiator",
etc. Principally those movies emphasize what we most remembered from a hero was his
struggling **VERGELIJKING FILMS**.

5 user generated reviews: Iron man

Review 1:

Delivers Intelligence SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT & Great Acting FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT with its Fun

ENTERTAINMENTVARING, 23 April 2008

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [sacflyzone](#) from United States

Rest assured, Iron Man is an absolutely amazing movie **ENTERTAINMENTVARING**. I won't dare spoil any of this remarkable movie for you but I do recommend it as highly as I possibly can. Marvel needed to get in to the solo movie making business long ago. Instead of leasing out their characters to other studios, they're making movies themselves **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**. Most everyone knows Iron Man is their first effort and what a great lead off film! This movie helps take the comic book genre to the highest level **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. Just like they did in the books, they reinvent standard epic adventure by "Marvelizing" characters and making them more believable. The Spider-Man and the X-Men movies did this to a degree but only as far as their respective studios wished to stay true to the source material **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Anything added or amended was for the benefit of the live action adaptation. Director Sam Raimi pulled this off by talking to the summer crowd, not down to them with the Spider-Man series. Jon Favreau has done the same thing here but I think he's done it even better **VERGELIJKING REGISSEUR – REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**. Raimi intentionally threw in a little cheese. Favreau adds nice bits of humor but not too much **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**. He also grounds the action and the suit of armor in firm reality. I've said it before but it's brave to reach for the highest common denominator with a big budget film **FILM ALS PRODUCT** and Favreau delivers a movie with as much feeling as it has action and intensity **ENTERTAINMENTVARING**. Needless to say, Robert Downey Jr. and company deliver the goods. It's a movie that has a wonderful balance that delivers intelligence with its fun **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT – HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**.

The amazing yet realistic action **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** is paced by the plot and characters that keep you interested from start to finish. What absolutely blew me away were the phenomenal special effects. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** I know they built a practical, working armor. What I loved is the use of CGI was used to augment the real life armor and not create something from scratch. Most all CGI constructs feel fake somehow but the stuff in Iron Man didn't seem fake even for an instant **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. As great as everything looked, what really drives the movie is the emotional resonance and down to earth nature of the plot **ONTROERING**. Sure the concept is wild but it's all presented so that you really believe

it could happen. I doubt anyone will find fault with this movie unless they went in trying to dislike it. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK

This is, without a doubt going to be one of my top 10 movies of 2008, quite possibly the number one film.

Review 2:

Obadiah, Ozzie and Oodles of Oooohs, 10 May 2008



Author: [David Ferguson \(fergusontx@gmail.com\)](mailto:fergusontx@gmail.com) from Dallas, Texas

Greetings again from the darkness. Terrific screen adaptation ENTERTAINMENTVARING of Stan Lee's comic creation brings Iron Man to life CONTEXT CBA! Directed by Jon Favreau ("Swingers" and Tony Stark's chauffeur REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD) the film blends extraordinary special effects and CGI FOCUS SPEKTAKEL with some wonderful acting FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT and explosive action FOCUS SPEKTAKEL.

I have long been an admirer of the talented Robert Downey, Jr ("Chaplin" and "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang") and only wish he could keep it together in real life so he could work more often FOCUS PERSONLIJK LEVEN ACTEUR. Favreau really allows Downey's knack for deadpan wise-cracking to play a huge role in defining Tony Stark GEBRUIK HAT ... the brilliant, billionaire, playboy, inventor and business tycoon who becomes Iron Man.

Every good comic book hero requires a terrific nemesis and Jeff Bridges is wonderful as a shaved-headed Obadiah Stane (and Iron Monger) FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Bridges and Downey are both top level actors and definitely bring a touch of class to the film (similar to Christian Bale as Batman). VERGELIJKING FILMS The supporting cast is rounded out by Gwyneth Paltrow (rarely seen on screen these days), Terrence Howard and Paul Bettany (the voice of Jarvis - Tony Stark's home based A.I. system). Creator Stan Lee also has a brief cameo as the guy Stark mistakes for Hugh Hefner (actually a pretty funny moment). HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID

The only thing keeping this one from greatness is there were just no surprises or twists in the story POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR. We spot the bad guy early and the story travels a pretty familiar arc COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT. Still ... this one is loads of fun and a visual smörgåsbord. Tip: stay til the end of the credits.

Review 3:

No Iron! How Ironic!, 6 November 2009



Author: [Hitchcoc](#) from United States

I got a kick out of this film **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. I have never seen one of the comic books nor do I know about the exploits of this figure. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** It is a nicely done superhero film **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** which traces the origins of the character. Robert Downey is quite good, balancing his innate arrogance against his good intentions **FOCUS ACTEUR TALENT**. Jeff Bridges is also an excellent adversary **ACTEURS TALENT**. One of the most impressive scenes in the movie is the opening in the deserts of Afghanistan as a roadside bomb explodes and Downey and a group of soldiers come under fire **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. It really gives one a sense of what those people face each day. **PARTICIPATIE** It may even be a bit real for a fantasy romp like this is. It is down and dirty. There are great events, including the building of the first suit and his effort to exact revenge against the forces that have used his weapons systems to persecute and destroy the civilian population **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**. There is a lot of action and it's not superfluous **GEBRUIK HAT**. Downey's relationship with Gwyneth Paltrow and the robots in his lab are a lot of fun **GRAPPIGHEID/HUMOR**. For pure escapism **GEBRUIK HAT**, it's really fun. I assume the sequel is on its way.

Review 4:

Robert Downey, Jr. shines **FOCUS ACTEUR TALENT**., 7 July 2008



Author: [commandercool88](#) from United States

Marvel's 'Iron Man' has swooped down to deliver a much-needed shot of adrenaline to a barren box office. Both in cash revenue **FILM ALS PRODUCT** and good old fashioned fun **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**. It catapults us into the lucrative summer blockbuster season, not with a whimper, but with a bang heard around the world. It's not perfect, and it may not change the way superhero flicks are made, **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** but this is one endlessly entertaining and explosively fun adventure that gets it right.

ENTERTAINMENTERVARING

'Iron Man' doesn't have claim to the wild popularity of 'Spider-Man' or 'Superman' or 'Batman' **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, which has provided director Jon Favreau and his team of writers a great opportunity **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** to shape a modern franchise for a 21st century

riddled with Mideast turmoil **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**. It gives 'Iron Man' a chance to be relevant, to direct a hint of social commentary directly at the war on terror **INTERPRETATIE**. But instead of pandering to its audience, 'Iron Man' is actually some of the most fun you're likely to have at the movies this year **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**. A solid script **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**, inventive direction, **ORIGINALITEIT** superb special effects **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, and an all-star cast makes this a rousing good time to be had.

While everything blends together exceptionally well, there's one man who shines above the rest, and that person is Robert Downey Jr. Continuing his streak of impressive performances, he really is the shining star that carries this film through and through **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. His presence is magnetic, and his sense of humor is spot-on sharp **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. For a man who at one point seemed down and out for good, it's indescribably wonderful to see him get the attention he deserves. A better man couldn't have been cast for this role. And when Terrence Howard, Jeff Bridges, and Gwyneth Paltrow can all come together and deliver fine performances, you've got something special on your hands.

'Iron Man' mixes all the right ingredients together to create a true summer blockbuster **FILM ALS PRODUCT** that sets an exciting tone for the rest of this season. Drama. Romance. Action. Suspense **SPANNING/SUSPENS**. Undeniably smart and incredibly witty **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**, it is a decidedly mainstream comic book adaptation that is sure to convert even those who have never picked up a comic book in their lives and know nothing about Tony Stark (like myself). It's a refreshing non-sequel in a franchise-saturated marketplace **NEGATIEVE KIJK OP POP CULTUUR**, and yet it does have the potential to become one of the better series out there. For 'Iron Man' is a more complicated superhero **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT**, and it teases us with plenty of stories yet to be told. So don't leave the theater before the credits end.

Review 5:

Iron man vs Captain Jack Sparrow **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR?**, 25 May 2008



Author: [hysteria71](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

Wow, All I can say is this was really well done! **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING** From the Soundtrack down to the very end. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** If you see this please wait until the very very last end credits. You will be rewarded for your patience. Robert Downey Jr. could be the next Johnny Depp in terms of making a this character a brand name. It already seems like this is

destined for a trilogy. It was like a cross between x-men and James Bond with the f/x and the cars and the lovely women walking about. VERGELIJKING FILMS Downey brought Stark to life as I wish they did with Spiderman. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT Instead we got a sappy soft spoken Tobey McGwire. well with Downey we got an in-your-face sarcastic alcoholic superhero with a conscience. From what I remember of the comic it stuck to the storyline with some modern twists CONTEXT CBA. It is an almost certainty that there will be 2-3 more Iron man films in the next few years. I expect to see this film again in the theaters and can't wait for the 2nd installment!

5 user generated reviews: The Incredible hulk

Review 1:

Attention - Origin Mixture!!!, 11 June 2008



Author: [Nytwolf](#) from Nashville, TN USA

For those that know only of the original comic book Hulk **CONTEXT CBA**, the TV series Hulk **CONNECTIE POP CUKLTUUR**, or the regrettable Ang Lee Hulk **VERGELIJKING FILMS**, you should know that this new version is a mixture of origins.

Without spoiling it, one of the larger ingredients in this new Hulk comes from a Marvel series that is an alternate universe **CONTEXT CBA**. There are many differences in the Ultimates Universe. In this version, Banner did not get his gamma radiation from exposure during an experimental bomb explosion. I won't spoil it, but you can go to www.marvel.com and look under "Ultimates" if you wish to get the gist of it.

I can truly say that this version captures a little of everything, so that no matter what your knowledge is of the Hulk character, there's tie-ins to everything.

Personally, I felt this reboot was well thought out **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT**. It allows for any future connectivity by not limiting it to one version of the Hulk. This will allow future Marvel movie-makers the ability to pick and choose aspects from the multitude of alternate universes, re-tellings, and time spans to combine whatever they please.

This was well cast. When the overall product can make me forget the fact that I don't like a specific actor, **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** and truly appreciate the total entertainment experience **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**, it's something to smile about. I won't mention which one I don't care for, since all that will do is spark useless debate.

Story - intricate and intelligent **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**, fast-paced, yet deeply explanatory, complex **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT**, yet easily taken in by non-geeks. Enough references to the true comic, alternate comic, and TV show **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, that everyone in the sneak peek seemed to be pleased. I surely was.

CGI was great **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Don't know why some have to nit-pick, but you can't please everyone, I guess. Action was wonderful with plenty of it **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**! If you've

ever read one of my reviews, you'll know that I'm a true fan of overall entertainment. While I have favorites, I don't base reviews on just one actor, writer, director, production company, genre, or whatever. So, if you don't like my opinion, so be it.

Review 2:

Finally a bit of meat and potato's to go with my green eggs and ham..., 9 June 2008



Author: [hoove1970](#) from United States

I went into this completely blind. I wanted a pure 'experience' **GEBRUIK HAT** I saw ONE trailer prior to this screening and closed my eyes while humming **CONENCTIE POP CULTUUR**. I had no idea if this was a second in the series or a re-make.

I was pleasantly surprised at the (obvious)complete makeover of our big green friend **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**, and this was a (P.R.)change for him no doubt... this delightful romp will bring him right into the "good guy fold" so to speak, within the umbrella of the, "Avengers" Franchise that is now an inevitability.

I thoroughly enjoyed this film **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**, Lots of time on character development **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**, and the intricacies that make you really care for a plot and its characters **ONTROERING**. I thought the acting was very well done although I found Liv Tyler to be the 'Weak Link'. Not sure she 'sold' her part that well or maybe it was just typecasting for that "Armageddon" girl **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**.

The CGI was top shelf **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. There were no seriously 'over done' moments of , "awww Come on" uttered in the theater **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. In this packed theater there were many ovations for the cameo's and the , "Bad guy gets it" scenes, and even for the **thrilling last minute of the movie** **SPANNING/SUSPENS**. So where was Samuel L. Jackson?

Please enjoy this more Comic like and more faithful version of THE HULK! **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

Review 3:

Hulk Smash!!!, 7 December 2008



Author: [departed07](#) from United States

After a five year absence from the big screen, Hulk is back with more punches and kicks to throw around than a thinking brain which would hurt more movie goers than cramming for a high school exam.

I'll admit that I love Ang Lee's version of the ticked off monster in which it took its time getting to know the characters before getting to the action sequences along with seeing how experiments could have consequences. Plus the cut scenes which resembled a comic book had it's high marks though it can only please those who truly love the atmosphere of comic books. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** This time around French director Louis Leterrier **REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD** brings more anger while managing to bring depth to the lost soul of Bruce Banner (Edward Norton **COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT**).

"The Incredible Hulk" is a reboot of the first movie (note: a third Hulk is in the works) in which it pays homage to the classic 1970's series **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** with Edward Norton (taking over Eric Bana) playing the title character after a failed experiment left him to turn into the Hulk while hurting the love of his life Betty Ross (Liv Tyler taking over the Jennifer Connelly role) and becoming a fugitive as he hides in Brazil working in a soda factory. It's not long when Betty's father, the indestructible General "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt taking over for Sam Elliot), finds a report that an elderly man has drinking a piece of gamma radiation and immediately finds the location of Bruce where the general gets a British/Russian import soldier by the name of Blonsky (Tim Roth) to help track down Bruce.

The action doesn't take much long before Bruce is bullied by a few thugs which leads him to turn into the Hulk smashing and throwing his enemies before going after the secret military. Bruce is now on the run as he wants to head back into the states to find the love of his life along with seeking a cure for his disease while Blonsky convinces his boss to give him the same radiation that made Bruce into the monster he is and having a one on one action.

With the film under two hours, The Incredible Hulk is great entertainment and a way of apologizing **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING** to those who hated the first Hulk movie in which those who seek mile-a-minute thrill rides will be pleased **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**. The film's got everything from a wild battle **FOCUS SPEKTAKELS**, wit humor **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** and while the performances are not Oscar-memorable, **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** I really cared for Norton as the title character where he wanted to rid his curse **EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT**

while remembering from 2003's Hulk that Eric Bana's version actually liked being angry
VERGELIJKING FILMS. Liv Tyler, Tim Roth and William Hurt are good as well along with Tim Blake Nelson as Dr. Sterns.

A note to all comic book historians or lovers, make sure to check out for Avenger references along with the last scene in the film when a certain character makes a cameo appearance
SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT.

Review 4:

Horrible, ENTERTAINMENTVARING 17 August 2008



Author: [thebengalimafia-1](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

When I walked out of Spider-Man 3 last summer, I kept asking myself, "I liked it, didn't I?" Of course I did. This was Spider-Man 3 after all, and after the phenomenal showing in Spider-Man 2, Spider 3 had to blow the second one out of the water. I was so thoroughly convinced I liked it that I went again the following night. It wasn't until a whole week later that I had to admit it. "Spider-Man 3 sucked big time." VERGELIJKING FILMS I had similar feelings as I walked out of "The Incredible Hulk ENTERTAINMENTVARING" only I was smarter this time around.

After hiding out in South America for five years, Bruce Banner (Edward Norton) is still plagued by the gamma radiation which turns him into the Hulk, or as Ferris al-Ghazi from "The Kingdom" said it, "The Green Beast!" Banner is still being hunted down by General "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt). I always wondered who would name their kid thunderbolt, even if it was only a comic book. I recently found out that it's a nick name for Thaddeus; makes sense. By some strange twist of fate General Ross discovers Banner's location and brings in Emile Blonsky (Tim Roth) to help hunt Banner down. Blonsky is an aging soldier who is more or less on his way out because he looks like crap. He says he'll do the job as long as he can although his body looks less like a whip cord and more like a pillow. Bruce comes back and takes the aid of the general's daughter Bettie (Liv Tyler). This was Bruce's love interest from the first film. Yes, the first film which we're supposed to pretend didn't happen VERGELIJKING FILMS.

It's pretty much at this point where the film's narrative element just stops moving. Did last year's writers strike have something to do with it? CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK The makers could've at least tried to give us more meat in the story SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT but they chose to

give us the senseless action **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. The rest of the film is pretty much Hulk versus Blonsky in three (or was it four?) different rounds. Every time he gets his ass kicked though, Blonsky comes thundering back with the help of, as Thaddeus puts it, a super soldier serum that was developed during World War II; **an obvious reference to Captain America** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**.

Now as far as the action goes I'm coming right out and saying it. **The first time we see the Hulk, he looks fake. I mean fake with a capital "F".** **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** The CGI was done by Rhythm and Hues, a special effects studio based in Hyderabad, India. Normally they do great work and they even won an Academy Award for last year's "The Golden Compass" **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**." But the first scenes of the Hulk were painfully bad. It was like a cartoon sitting in the middle of a live action film a la Roger Rabbit **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. The later scenes are done much better but they don't make up for the fatal mistake of giving us a crappy first look of the film's main attraction.

This film is Marvel's second home production after Iron Man. **What made Iron Man great was a good story, talented cast that had loads of chemistry, a balance of action and narrative, and characters that felt real and not "reel."** **VERGELIJKING FILMS** It was like they all had a history and they worked together. In this film (like so many other summer action films) **the story gets kicked to the curb the last 30 minutes to give us the special effects bonanza** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, none of which was that entertaining. **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**

I'm sure this'll make loads of money on opening weekend but that much is expected **FILM ALS PRODUCT**. Why couldn't they leave this one alone? Didn't the studios lose enough money on the first Hulk disaster? Apart from poor writing, bad CGI, **under developed characters** **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**, **and overly cartoon-ish action** **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**, The Incredible Hulk isn't a bad movie. Oh, and there's a surprise at the end. Problem is, I knew about this surprise six months ago.

Review 5:

An excellent, underrated action film, 7 October 2009



Author: [Timstuff](#) from Connecticut, USA

When I first saw the teaser for this movie, I was a bit disappointed **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. I thought it looked too much like a cheap remake of the 2004 movie, and I had a hard time getting excited for it **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Then, I saw the REAL trailer, and my anticipation

grew **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. Finally, I saw the final film, and it became one of my favorite movies of 2008. This is a movie that IMO ought to please both hardcore fans of the comics who felt let down by Ang Lee's 2004 interpretation, as well as fans of the original TV series **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**. It was a very tricky balance to achieve, but the movie somehow managed to pull it off.

Edward Norton is excellent as Dr. Banner **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, and is much more in line with what fans of both the comics and TV series would expect. Unlike rugged Aussie Eric Bana, Norton conveys the persona of a twerpy but vigilant scientist, and while his performance may not be as memorable as Robert Downy Jr's Tony Stark, he still delivers. The rest of the cast is great well, and if you've seen Iron Man the acting here is fairly consistent with it (which is good, since these are meant to be "sister movies" in the same continuity).

CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK

The action in this movie is fast paced and in good quantity **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, with a surprising amount of it focusing around Banner himself rather than his green alter-ego. Like I said, both fans of the comics and TV show should be pleased, **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** because they managed to find a good screen time balance between the two, keeping our emotional investment in the movie firmly grounded on Norton's Banner. The scene where Hulk takes on the Humvees was awesome **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**, and despite my initial skepticism based on the trailers **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, the climax with Abomination was top-notch monster mash goodness **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**.

It's a shame that Hulk's brand doesn't seem to have much resonance with audiences, because this movie was pretty much exactly what I wanted when I walked into the theater. It's a fast action movie with heart and intelligence behind it **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**, and it manages to respect the incarnations that came before it. Whether you're a fan of Superhero movies and comics or you just want a great action film, IMO this movie doesn't disappoint.

5 user generated reviews: The Dark Knight

Review 1:

Film surpasses the hype, 9 July 2008



Author: [straightblaster](#) from United States

We've been subjected to enormous amounts of hype and marketing for the Dark Knight. We've seen Joker scavenger hunts and one of the largest viral campaigns in advertising history and it culminates with the actual release of the movie.

Everything that's been said is pretty much spot on. This is the first time I can remember where a summer blockbuster film far surpasses the hype. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

For as much action as there is in this movie, it's the acting that makes it a great piece of work.

FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT Between all the punches, explosions and stunt-work is some great dialog work. All the actors have their moments.

Bale's Batman is the definitive Batman because we see everything in this character finally on film. Martial arts skills, cunning, great tactical thinking, forensic application, technological genius to advance or improve Luscious Fox's inventions/technological breakthroughs, intimidating personality, and even a little swashbuckling.

As for Heath, yes he gets credit for his performance as the Joker FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. But you have to also recognize Jonathan and Chris Nolan REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD for the writing and treatment of the character. It's not just the fact that Ledger makes the Joker so menacing, but the Nolans have given the character this great manifesto that drives its actions. The Joker's stance on chaos, order, anarchy, the morality of the average modern human being make the character so interesting psychologically. COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT The Nolans drafted a complex character and only a perfect performance could've pulled something like this off. That's how difficult of a role this was, and that's why Ledger's performance is so great.

This isn't an action movie. It's a film that explores literary themes of the hero and villain

CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST, as well as order and anarchy. Yes, listen to the dialog because it's all in there.

Review 2:

Surpasses "Begins" in every aspect!!!, VERGELIJKING FILMS 7 July 2008



Author: [johnnymacbest](#) from United States

Christopher Nolan's REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD second bundle of joy "The Dark Knight" EXCEEDED all of my expectations!!! With the success of 2005's reboot of the Batman franchise, they took what was already established and expanded it, amped it up, and gave a deeper, darker and brooding story COMPLEXITEIT/AMBIGUÏTEIT that is more gripping GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE and the suspense is likely to catch you of guard several times throughout SPANNING/SUSPENS. Christian Bale delves more deeper into Batman, sworn to fight evil and injustice, though also quite reluctant and uncertain if his crusade can ever end and cleanse his inner turmoil from his fractured soul due to the murder of his beloved parents. But with the help of his trusted butler/ally Alfred (played superbly by Michael Cane FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT) grounds him, gives him moral support, and keeps him in check. But the real star of the show is Heath Ledger as Batman's most deadly enemy, The Joker FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. I can HONESTLY tell you that: as good as Jack Nicholson was in Batman'89 he is CHILD'S PLAY compared to this Joker. He is sadistic, psychotic, and downright SCARIER SPANNING/SUSPENS and PSYCHOLOGICALLY disturbing than the previous incarnation of The Clown Prince of Crime and Ledger gives it his all to do him justice. Along with the original cast comes some fresh faces such as Aaron Eckhart, Maggie Gyllenhaal and more. I must say though I liked Katie Holmes, Gyllenhaal gives a much better performance and is a far cry from the "damsel-in-distress" stereotype FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT (though there's a little of it, THANKFULLY) that's common in films. Bale and Gyllenhall have MUCH better chemistry this time around more so than Holmes. VERGELIJKING FILMS Even better, the fight sequences are vastly improved and feature more brutal and bone crushing combat than "Begins" in addition to new technology at Batman's disposal. Also worth mentioning is screenwriter Jonathan Nolan, who gives the film an added frosting to an already delicious cake. Simply put, The Dark Knight is totally more bad ass than "Begins." ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE The action is great, and the plot is more deeper and engrossing. COMPLEXITEIT I applaud Christopher Nolan, Christian Bale, and especially Heath Ledger (who sadly passed away earlier this year) FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN and all those aboard for believing in Mr. Nolan's talents for this second installment. Although some may feel a bit of melancholy over Ledger's death, but as a final note I will say this sincerely from my heart: Remember Heath Ledger and honor him in your minds and hearts not only for his performances, but as a human being and father to his daughter Matilda Ledger. May we issue him best wishes for his family and friends and his daughter for

years to come. Remember . . . Honor him not only for this role and past roles, but as an incredible individual and talented actor. Rest in peace. Heath Ledger: 4/4/1979-1/22/2008.

Review 3:

When they said 'Dark' did they mean a coal mine at night, 23 April 2009



Author: [billpappas-1](#) from United States

I just rented this from Netflix and forced myself to watch it till the end. What a dreadful, boring ENTERTAINMENTVARIING yet expensive movie FILM ALS PRODUCT. It was so dimly lit, they could have had any of the thousands of out-of-work actors in Southern California in it with no perceptible difference. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID I guess a couple more explosions would have helped (not really FOCUS SPEKTAKEL). I only watched it cause of Heath Ledger's excellent performance FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT in Brokeback Mountain. Boy, was I disappointed. I didn't care about anyone while watching except for myself who was waiting for it to end. At times the dialog was difficult to understand with the volume way up but the loud soundtrack made every sound effect rattle the furniture.

I just don't get what passes for great entertainment nowadays. I had to watch some old Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons afterward as an intelligent antidote CONNECTIE POPULAIRE CULTUUR to this cartoonish movie that tries for so much significance, an odd combination. It's like looking for significance and the meaning of life in an infomercial. Don't bother.

Review 4:

Wake up, people., 4 February 2009



Author: [alexlennon55](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

Let me preface this by saying that the dark knight is a good movie. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Unfortunately, that's all it is. Not excellent, not a masterpiece by ANY means GEBRUIK HAT, and anyone who tries to tell me this movie's a CLASSIC, save your breath TIJDLOOSHEID. This flick's a summer blockbuster and nothing more. CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR

let me start out with the good parts: Heath Ledger and Michael Caine. Both actors brought

good things to the table and prevented the movie from being just dismally bad **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT- POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. When I first saw Ledger was to be cast as the Joker, I was disappointed; I guess I'd been hoping for someone different. What a sleeper he turned out to be. Unfortunately, Ledger essentially carried the film. He was the one strong performance among the leads. Some aspects of Ledger's Joker were downright creepy, **SPANNING/SUSPENS** creative **ORIGINALITEIT**, and most importantly, convincing **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. Props to you Heath, you were quite a talented actor. Michael Caine as Alfred was as good as he was in Begins, but he's a pretty minor character which is a shame.

I'm pretty neutral about Morgan Freeman, he did a good enough job, but could've been better, **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** which leads me to my next point: the script. What an awful piece of trash this was. **COMPLEXITEIT** The script was the reason why Lucius could've been better; it certainly wasn't Freeman's fault. The lines were flat, the storyline was contrived, and there were plot holes en masse. I think the Joker's lines were OK, as they fit with Ledger's portrayal of him. It was a shame, then, that the writing for Batman, Bruce, Dent, Gordon, and Lucius was completely flat.

I think what irked me most about the movie was Two-Face's role. **It didn't work in the film at all Subtilliteit/Geloofwaardigheid**. It almost seemed as though two face had been some kind of afterthought. Dent was all well and good, but two face was in the movie for all of 25 minutes, and killing him off at the end was mind-bogglingly stupid. Two-Face had such potential, especially for the 3rd movie, and the character was a complete failure.

More plot holes than you can shake a stick at. Everything went like clockwork for the Joker, from the bank robbery to the interrogation to the jailbreak to the mayor to the hospital. **It's all WAY too easy**. The story isn't coherent at all and was also too complex. **COMPLEXITEIT** I could have done without about half the minor characters.

Nevertheless, none of that stuff really bothers me nearly as much as this: people are calling it a 'masterpiece' and a 'classic' and 'timeless' **GEBRUIK HAT- TIJDLOOSHEID**. That last one really gets me. What are you, stupid? this movie embodies none of those words. Wake up, people. Check back with me in 25 years and if it's still #5 I'll give it some thought. For Christ's sake, it topped the chart for like 2 months! that to me is just obscene. **Tell me that it's better than Casablanca, Seven Samurai, Goodfellas, a Clockwork Orange, Rear Window, Seven, and Apocalypse Now and try keeping a straight face VERGELIJKING FILMS**. In a perfect world, TDK

wouldn't even be on the top 250, but I'll be happy when it gets below #150. Read: 'when', not 'if'.

Review 5:

Are you kidding?, 2 January 2009



Author: [GNickL](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

To think that this movie belongs in the top 100 movies of all time let alone the top five is ludicrous. You bet, it's quite a spectacle **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. But spectacle doesn't make a great movie. There's one truly great character and everyone knows it's Heath Ledger's Joker **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. That was a magical pairing of great writing and great acting.

But what happened to the rest of the movie? Besides The Joker the film is merely almost good **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**. That is if you like exceedingly dark and depressing movies that have little if anything to feel good about. It's mildly suspenseful **SPANNING/SUSPENS** at times but much of the action is telegraphed. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** Let's see some more stupid police who can't see another Joker getaway coming from a mile away.

I'm no wimp -- I can be engrossed by and accept wholesale carnage when it's in something like "Saving Private Ryan" **VERGELIJKING FILMS** -- but this is yet another movie in which it doesn't matter how many faceless civilians and police die just as long as there can be lots of shooting and car crashes and the stars are OK. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

And what of poor Batman? Christian Bale does a creditable job in the role **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, yet this is really a movie about The Joker. The hero and who he is isn't nearly as well explored as the villain.

Besides Ledger the two old pros, Michael Cain and Morgan Freeman, play the most interesting characters. Gary Oldman does a decent job as James Gordon. The problem is we're never given any reason to doubt him yet there is this undercurrent to the character that maybe he's not really working for the good guys. **COMPLEXITEIT**

The scene where Batman hunts The Joker as SWAT teams come crashing into the building is one of the most confusing messes I've seen. **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

COMMENTAAR. There's no clear idea what's happening and why and The Joker's final capture is anticlimactic. The turn to the dark side by character Harvey Dent is poorly developed and in the final scenes, lacking much logic **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS.** And the suspension of logic **GEBRUIK HAT** -- especially when it comes to the evil doing of The Joker -- just goes too far.

In the end, despite Batman's expected saving of the child, the movie simply peters out with a muddled message and Batman zooming off on his motorcycle in the direction of -- we can only presume -- another sequel.

If you want a dark, action-packed film then see "Quantum of Solace." It's not a great film -- not nearly as good as "Casino Royal" -- but it's a fair shot better than "The Black Knight."

VERGELIJKING FILMS – VOORSPELLING REACTIE

5 user generated reviews: Watchmen

Review 1:

Stays True to the "Big Joke," But This May Confuse Some COMPLEXITEIT., 3 March 2009



Author: [thebryandavis](#) from New Orleans, Louisiana

Before anyone sees this film, Zach Snyder REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD should be given a pat on the back. He did what a dozen directors struggled to do for twenty years: he made a Watchmen movie. It seems unthinkable that anyone could properly put the greatest graphic novel of all time on the screen. But Snyder has done pretty much that. CONTEXT CBA

While it is not Alan Moore's Watchmen, it is the closest thing that anyone else could have put on the screen. Snyder approached the material with enough reverence that fans of the comic will appreciate the film VOORSPELLING REACTIE. As Snyder has openly declared, the final act does include significant changes, but the alterations that take place fit better on the big screen than the original ending would have. It works because it cuts down on a lot of the necessary back story which Snyder could not include.

Even though many pages of the book were not included, Snyder did take the time to try and preserve other information by including short "historical" sequences in the fantastic opening title sequence SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. By this point, viewers will also have had a chance to appreciate the stellar, and time appropriate, soundtrack CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR. Unlike the hard rock recordings the Snyder chose for the background of 300, Watchmen's background fits the tone and mood of most of the scenes. VERGELIJKING FILMS The only questionable choice was the selection of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," not because of the recording, but rather its awkward placement. Some may also question Snyder's inclusion of gore not present in the book CONTEXT CBA. While the comic does include its share of violence, Snyder did overtly change several scenes to be more violent. These changes, while flashy on film, may disturb squeamish moviegoers. However, changes aside, Snyder has captured the essence of the book and packaged it in a beautiful 2 hour and 40 minute delight. Overall, it is a satisfying film experience for someone familiar with the source material ENTERTAINMENTVARING.

But this might be a different experience for anyone who does not know the book. There is a lot to digest, and the overwhelming visuals FOCUS SPEKTAKEL may distract some moviegoers from the bigger picture. VOORSPELLING REACTIE The interaction of these unique characters

remains an integral point to understanding this film, and when the book was pared down for the movie, the relationships of the masked adventures became a bit more forced. The best part of the comic was the glimpse of what is "beneath the hood," and we have less of that in Snyder's adaptation. CONTEXT CBA Additionally, the ending, while simplified, is still a bit convoluted.

Fans and those previously unfamiliar with Watchmen should go in with an open mind. Snyder has performed what Doctor Manhattan might deem a miracle, so it may take more than one viewing to truly appreciate this unique adaptation.

Review 2:

Best movie I've seen in a long time ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, 10 March 2009

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [Casey Smith](#) from United States

Firstly, I have not read the graphic novel. This was deliberate, since I knew there was going to be a movie, and reading any book tends to ruin the movie. I'm sure there are a whole bunch of things in the graphic novel that they left out or changed, and it's hard for those who have read it to imagine how people could understand the subtleties of the story without it. But trust me, the morally complex, COMPLEXITEIT multi-layered characters and plot were very well delivered by the movie alone GEBRUIK HAT. There was nothing that seemed like it didn't make sense or wasn't quite explained. The movie was just about perfect.

I'm surprised to hear a lot of reviews saying that this is just an action movie for teenage boys; I thought quite the opposite. There was much less action than I expected FOCUS SPEKTAKEL, the movie centered mostly on emotions and ideas conveyed through dialog, narration and character flashbacks SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. The action scenes were all fairly short, though when there was action it was delightfully innovative ORIGINEEL/INNOVATIEF. There were a lot of nasty and unexpected twists like limbs snapping, guts sticking to the ceiling, bones audibly crunching GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE... Every time something violent happened, they made it interesting and shocking rather than recreating the generic ho-hum violence of every other movie. (And there was no obligatory 30-minute-long final action scene culminating in the conclusion of the plot... oh joy! Those get so boring. SERIEUS) Plus, many of the scenes were rather bold for a mainstream film, and showed certain things that are normally hidden off-screen or completely avoided. The only example I feel I can give without spoiling anything is

the full frontal male nudity, something that is rather conspicuously hidden in almost every Hollywood movie. **ORIGINEEL** This movie isn't concerned about hiding little things like that, just as it isn't concerned about hiding certain subjects that most movies wouldn't show.

This movie definitely isn't for everyone. People expecting another Dark Knight will be disappointed **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** (or, as in my case, thrilled), as this movie is completely unique. People who want an action movie and don't want all that talking and thinking will be disappointed. But to those looking for a long, complicated, deeply moving **ONTROERING** epic that will really make them think about the very concepts of right, wrong, and heroism **COMPLEXITEIT** (and who haven't read the book, which based on other reviews seems to ruin it): Do NOT miss this movie!

Review 3:

Boring ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, Pointless, Confusing COMPLEXITEIT, 17 March 2009



Author: [emmasophia](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I've never read the graphic novel, nor have I ever heard of the movie prior to the copyright controversy. When the controversy broke, I asked myself "wth is Watchmen?". Then the hype followed shortly after the official release date.

So, I finally went to watch it with some anticipation. I didn't read any reviews prior to seeing it. I've heard some comments about it from the radio and that's about it. It started off "okay". I was a bit confused w/ the random flashbacks...but I had hope. It will get better.

Then it just goes down hill from there. This movie is about a bunch of washed up HUMANS with no powers and their desire to dress up in silly masks, spandex and costumes to go fight crimes. **There were all these silly side sub plots that totally confused the storyline!** **COMPLEXITEIT** Is the nuclear war gonna happen? I don't know cuz it spent so much time on these subplots!

Without ever reading the graphic novel, I expected these people to have some "powers". They're all quite powerful for not having powers! The sock guy's ink blotch moves...how does he do that?! **All in all, it's a bunch of boring people who think that they can save the world.** **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

The movie jumps around way to much, doesn't have a solid plot line COMPLEXITEIT, bored the hell out of me! ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE The only time I paid attention was when someone's bone popped out or someone's arms got chopped off. Other than those few scenes, I cared less about the blue penis...or the fact that some nerd guy can't get it on w/o his "pseudo" superhero costume. The gay man who is supposed to be the "smartest" man on earth.

I ultimately walked out about 2 hours in (i think the scene where Blue guy takes Spandex chick to Mars). You can criticize all you want about how I have no place to comment if I didn't finish the film, but honestly, I couldn't BARE to finish it! It was painful! DON'T WATCH THIS MOVIE! I would recommend watching Paul Blart over this anyday!

Review 4:

A rated "R" Comic Book movie great for Adults, 19 June 2009



Author: [machngunjoe](#) from United States

This was (dare I say) perfect in the comic book movie genre ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. I absolutely loved all the characters especially Dr. Manhaten. There was scene that certainly are not intended for children's eyes, but its not over the top, meaning I have seen worst graphic scenes in Indiana Jones, notably the villains death scenes at the end of each.

VERGELIJKING FILMS

THE stayed true to the comics and CONTEXT CBA I love the universe they created with Nixon in his 5th term in office, etc. INTERPRETATIE

There are a lot of flashbacks and I think flashbacks within flashbacks but its all good. The director did a great job wielding the story lines together in 3 1/2 hours. Superb visuals FOCUS SPEKTAKEL and a fantastic storyline, ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE I was a little upset at the end of what happened to one of the characters, but hey can't have everything.

I would recommend this to anyone who loves comic book movies, however this isn't like your normal comic book movies, as it is grittier and darker then most SPANNING/SUSPENS. It takes the genre in a different direction much like how Chris Nolan did with the recent installments of Batman (which I also love).

Review 5:

Awesome movie (with Disclaimer), 11 June 2009



Author: [ArasimusX](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

Disclaimer: 1) Read the novel 2) Pay attention 3) Avoid viewing with anyone that knows nothing about the Watchmen 4) Avoid viewing with anyone that doesn't like complex plots COMPLEXITEIT 5) Avoid viewing with someone who doesn't like graphic violence 6) It is LONG but for good reason

Pros: - Great cinematography SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID and graphics - Respectably true to the source material - Rorschach is awesome - Acting (for the major character) matches what I expected CONTEXT CBA

Cons: POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR - Looses some people with so many plot elements happening and sometimes not in chronological order VOORSPELLING REACTIE - Theater version will be worse than the DVD due to time constraints - Some "slow" parts but if you like the source material you won't mind as much - Could have been better if they didn't follow the exact timeline as the book rather than jumping around as much COMPLEXITEIT.

OK so I read the novel about 2 months before I saw this movie so everything was pretty fresh in my head... and in my opinion this movie represented the book very well considering how much content is jammed packed into the novel. For example... A good deal of the back story dealing with the minute-men was packaged into the opening credits; the issue with this is that I understood what I was seeing but an average viewer would miss the context CONTEXT CBA. Think of it this way... this movie has trouble standing upright without instruction and the graphic novel provides the manual.

****SPOILERS**** One thing I thought the movie captured rather well was the "mood" of the novel SUBTILITEIT. I say this because I saw the movie with someone who hadn't read the novel... and they were shocked at parts like the Comedian shooting JFK and the pregnant girl. Granted those things we're horrible but that's the point; he's a "hero" and supposedly greater than everyone else yet is actually more evil - as opposed to most comic heroes that have small personality problems at most. Also, the representation of the popular characters were close if not exact to what I had visualized when I read the novel. Rorschach was perfect - voice, psychotic mood, mannerisms. Comedian and Night Owl II were right on, and Dr. Manhattan

was just as emotionless/detached as I had hoped. The rest I don't care as much about.

FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

Another note, I actually like the ending of the movie better than the book

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE – CONTEXT CBA. A) the movie ending better facilitated the plot's translation to the screen SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. Given some giant squid thing would have seem out of place related to the rest of the movie material. B) The movie ending had the same effect as the novel ending. Plus it offered a more reasonable future for Dr. Manhattan.

5 User generated reviews: The Crow

Review 1:

Brilliant **GEBRUIK HAT** and **beautiful** **SUBTILITEIT** film that successfully combines extreme violence and gore and a sense of morality, 13 April 2006

★★★★★★★★★

Author: [tonymurphylee](#) from USA

Brandon Lee, the son of Bruce Lee, died during the filming of this film in a freak on set accident. **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN ACTEURS** His legacy will forever live on because his final film is perfect **SUBTILITEIT** in every way. Based on the very disturbing graphic novels of James O' Barr, THE CROW follows an innocent young man named Eric Draven (Brandon Lee) whose soon to be wife was brutally raped and murdered by a pack of savage hoodlums on Halloween Eve, AKA Devil's Night **CONTEXT CBA**. He too is murdered by these freaks and on the same night one year, the crow brings Eric's soul back to him and allows him to wake from the dead as a sort of zombie so that he can set the wrong things right and let his own soul rest in peace. However, this task leads him to a drug-lord known as Top-Doller, who may be worthy of one of the most disgusting villains in film history. He doesn't know it yet, but he unfortunately must also take down Top-Doller before he can sleep, but doing so may be trickier than he imagined possible. The beauty of this film mirrors that of a comic book, and the internal hell of living in a city that is so full of scumbags and ridden with crime and murder is perfectly captured here. **INTERPRETATIE** From the grimy dark wet look of the film **SUBTILITEIT** to the pure out rock and roll soundtrack **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, the film looks like trash, but it is beautiful trash that viewers will realize perfectly evokes sympathy from the characters. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** The characters however are all done just as well as the scenic look of the city. **SUBTILITEIT** Brandon Lee plays Eric as straight as is appropriate and even though he isn't exactly a good actor, his charisma gives the film a very charming light. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** the wild cast of villains are all good. All of the characters are perfect in the comic book interpretation of villains or bad doers, and the hero are all so perfect and so above the villains in their own respect. Crows are really beautiful creatures, and the hero in this film is shown just as pure, and yet he is anything but not angry at the jerks that messed up his life. He is a rock star who acts playfully when alive, and down when he is dead, but he takes a really joyful glee in torturing and killing his victims that makes the film **darkly humorous** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. So with a perfect soundtrack, the ultimate Gothic feel, the beauty of evil, and the madness of villains, **THE CROW is a perfect comic book film.** **ENTERTAINMENTVARIING** This film gives us a different representation of what life could be like in a city destroyed by evil and hatred. This film is perfect and I can't recommend it enough. For those who don't like violence, this could be the worst film you could decide to watch, but for everyone else, open your eyes and witness one of the greatest film experiences of your life. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**

Review 2:

A Gothic Love Story, 17 August 2006

★★★★★★★★★

Author: [de_cafe6914](#) from United States

The Crow is a Gothic masterpiece **GEBRUIK HAT**. It is perhaps one of the only action movies to have a lot of heart, and a very uplifting love story and message. **There are no other words to describe it other than amazing** **ENTERTAINMENTVARIING**. It is one of my personal favorites, and I loved every minute of it.

Story: The movie is about rock guitarist Eric Draven and his girlfriend Shelly that get murdered the day before their wedding by a group of thugs. One year after his death, Eric is resurrected from the grave, and guided by a mysterious crow. His mission: To avenge the

death of himself and his lover. While seeking his vengeance, Eric is plagued by the pain of losing his love, and constantly reminded of what he lost via flashbacks. Sarah, Eric's daughter-like friend, soon learns of Eric's return, and the film deals with her aspect of the situation as well. It sounds like a simple enough mindless action plot, but the movie packs so much emotion and power into it **COMPLEXITEIT**. The movie really exploits the power of love and friendship. Although gritty and violent, it is emotional enough to make even the biggest man teary-eyed. **ONTROERING**

Direction: Alex Proyas(Dark City) filmed a Gothic masterpiece **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD – GEBRUIK HAT**. The directing is very slick and stylish **SUBTILITEIT**. Proyas was not afraid to make the film have a very dark and bleak look, as to really show how sad Eric is **ONTROERING**. Rain is a character in this movie, and even the rain is filmed beautifully. Proyas got everything right: Pacing, Color, Mood, and Style **SUBTILITEIT**. Excellent stuff! **ENTERTAINMENTERVARING** **Acting:** Four actors stood out in my mind in this film. Brandon Lee(Eric Draven) played his part with excellent skill. He knew what he was doing. He nailed every line, and brought a real humanity to the part, which is great **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. It's important to be able to relate to a character, and care about it **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. Michael Wincott(Top Dollar) executed the part of the villain with ease. There's a definite evil in the part, as well as humanity, and Wincott knew exactly how to do it. Ernie Hudson(Officer Albrecht) portrayed the city cop quite well. Even though the part was simple enough, Hudson made it very memorable, and brought a lot of meaning to his character. One of the most amazing actors was Rochelle Davis(Sarah) This girl can act! I felt her pain and anger throughout the whole film, and that voice! Man! All the acting in the film was top-notch, but those performances stood out to me.

Score: The music was powerful. It draws you in to every scene. Graeme Revell is outstanding as a composer. The music fits the mood for the film. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

Violence: The film is an action movie, so, there is violence **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. It is pretty straight forward, and quite gritty. There's plenty of stabbings, brawls, and bloody shootouts.

Profanity/Sexual Themes: They are not afraid to drop the f-bomb in the film. Language is throughout, and pretty strong. There is a mild rape scene, as well as some brief female nudity.

Substance Abuse: One of the characters is a morphine addict, and some others snort coke. Moderate.

Overall: The Crow is an excellent action-thriller **that goes into deep and powerful territory** **COMPLEXITEIT**. I loved every frame, and every minute of the movie. A must-have. 10/10

Review 3:

The Mother Of All Goth Movies!, 22 November 2005



Author: [telekon-3](#) from United States

Having read the original comic book series in which this The Crow was based, one can see how a direct film translation would have been difficult to accomplish **CONTEXT CBA**. Unfortunately several movie clichés have been added: A police man butting heads with his superior, a kidnapped girl, a grand finale on top of a cathedral **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** **COMMENTAAR** (ala Batman, Metropolis **VERGELIJKING FILM**), a buddy cop to the rescue, a villain that is killed by a hero who throws him off a very high place and onto a large pointy object.

What THE CROW lacks in story is made up for with beautiful direction POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR by Alex Proyas REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD, stunning goth-noir cinematography GEBRUIK HAT, and a memorable theme by Graham Revell CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR.

This is more than your average comic book movie (do not expect a SPIDERMAN, BATMAN, or X-MEN). Here, our "hero"'s actions come from what he alone feels: pain, loss, anger, isolation, despair. His primary goal is not to bring justice to this world, his main goal is to kill those who have murdered him and his fiancé and to return to the grave where he can be reunited with her.

Brandon Lee really is good in the lead roll FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT, his presence can be felt throughout the film, including scenes filmed after his death GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPAITE. Had he lived he would have made an excellent action hero. Perhaps the MATRIX trilogy would have been better starring a real martial artist and a proved dramatic actor such as Brandon Lee.

THE CROW has a real soul and inner life that is rare for action movies.

Review 4:

Nothing new here, 14 December 2003



Author: [Zoopansick](#) from Ohio

Despite comments that proclaim this movie really deep and memorable the performance by the "late great Brandon FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN ACTEUR Lee (as if he was a great actor or even as good as his dad FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT)" this movie left a lot to be desired as far as I'm concerned. Now let me say right off, if you are a fan of the comic book (or other popular Gothic literature) you probably will like the movie or at least find it more interesting then I did. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK But I am reviewing this movie from the perspective of an action fan / experienced movie watcher and therefore I have no particular bias towards the genre.

Anyway the plot is pretty standard COMPLEXITEIT. Guy is wronged by criminals who kill him and his wife and he comes back a year later to seek revenge. I guess this is slightly different cause usually the bad guys only "think" they kill the guy, but this time they managed to finish him off and he comes back to life (sorta). Still it's your standard revenge/action movie plot with little suspense SPANNING/SUSPENS actually cause he is invincible so there is no chance he will get hurt. So he kills abunch of guys and the action is so so. The biggest gunfight is pretty lame actually, the bad guys just keep shooting at him and the bullets have no effect... but they never learn and keep shooting, silly criminals SUBTILITEIT. It has a predictable ending and there isn't very much mystery. SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT

The movie also has managed to pack a ton of clichés that any action fan can spot ORIGINLAITEIT. The angry police chief, the helpful police officer who comes to the Crows aid at the end (only after being suspended, cause as we all know the cop can never get anything done while actually on the force), the girl who is gonna kidnapped by the bad guys at the end, the fight on the roof (sometimes on another perilous location, but rooftop is standard), the bad guy falling off and getting impaled, the climactic fight in the rain, pretty lame chase ENTERTAINMENTERVARING scenes (2), vigilante hero, rainy dark city (someone said think Blade Runner, I wouldn't give it that much credit, I would say think Split Second with Rutger Hauer), flashbacks to the original crime. There are probably a few more but those are just the ones off the top of my head.

Anyway the movie is not nearly as original as some of it's fans make it sound ORIGINALITEIT. The characters are really 2-dimensional ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS. It's kind of funny to hear people say that the movie is deep. It's really simple COMPLEXITEIT, the guy is killed he comes back to avenge his girl friends death and kill the bad guys. There are some attempts to have the Crow represent a Christ like figure (palms healing, touching the crack-whore and the drugs come out of her body and she turns a new leaf in life, the whole resurrection aspect (i guess)). Still that is only a few brief scenes, and besides when you really think of it, Jesus came back to life so that he could ascend to heaven, the Crow came back so he could kill the guys who murdered his girlfriend and ruined his budding rock career (btw his guitar solo on top of the building was really moving). ONTROERING

So in conclusion you could do better. Darkman is essentially the same movie VERGELIJKING FILMS but is more entertaining and certainly has a more interesting directing style. The action here is pretty mediocre and the results are predictable (though I admit pretty much 100% of action movies are predictable). ORIGINALITEIT To fans of the comic I would recommend it (I guess, though I have never read the comic so I don't know how faithful a representation this is).

One more thing. I love how he (and now on this site) people quote Edgar Allen Poe (who is much more worthy of your time than this movie) and give the quote "Suddenly I heard a tapping, as of someone gently rapping...at my chamber door". I guess for the makers of the movie they thought, "Crow, raven who will notice that it isn't the same bird? It sounds cool so let's just put it in there." Apparently not the fans of this movie.

Zoopansick

Review 5:

Among the Worst That Hollywood Has to Offer!, 3 January 2008



Author: [im_veritas_photo](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I wish there were a zero rating on IMDb. The movie industry ought to have a "Toxic Waste" rating, the kind that damages our society with absolutely no chance of cleanup. Yes, I believe that The Crow is the Love Canal of movies...

I can't believe this motion picture was directed by the same person who directed "Dark City." VERGELIJKING FILMS If I had seen The Crow (an earlier film) first, I would never have viewed Dark City, and that would have been a shame. The two don't belong on the same planet... They truly don't reside in the same universe. The only thing I can figure: The Crow came out of Hollywood, while Dark City came out of Australia.

Regardless of what Roger Ebert says about The Crow (he called it "good" ? CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR), to me it is the worst piece of ultra-violent dreck I have ever seen, even including "Narc," the only other film I've rated a "1" here ENTERTAINMENTERVARING. Both richly deserve a complete zero. I detect a pattern here: Both films' stories take place in Detroit. Moral: Never watch any film whose setting is Detroit! The Crow is genuinely scary to me, but not in the way

you might imagine. SPANNING/SUSPENS I think the horribly ultra-violent spirit of the film, completely unrelieved throughout (no matter the insipid, unbelievably saccharine "good guys win" ? ending) contributed directly to Brandon Lee's death FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN ACTEUR. How else can you explain something as bizarre as a "blank" movie-prop round killing someone during the filming of a motion picture? It is obvious to me that so many (way-over-the-top many) "blank" shots had to be fired at the (so-called) "hero" that this must have contributed to Lee's death. Someone said this film is a fitting memorial to Lee. Indeed. No further comment required.

Even the music during the ending credits: "It Can't Rain All the Time," or whatever it's called, is nausea-producing garbage. The singer is horribly flat (pitch, that is). Just listen to it, if you dare; it is totally forgettable trash. Thank heavens it has been forgotten! I made the mistake of starting to play the comment track by the Producer and Screenwriter. I do wish English grammar allowed me to de-capitalise their titles. I think they are quite demented, totally out of touch with reality... I believe their warped view of the world has caused them to descend into the depths of self-aggrandizing insanity.

People: Do not view The Crow, ever. Unless you like flirting with brain-damaging toxic waste. If you let any teenager view this film, it should be considered that you should be jailed for launching sociopathic violence on the rest of us. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK

Thank Goodness I watched The Crow only once. I am hoping that Time Will Heal All Wounds.

5 User generated reviews: Spawn

Review 1:

Terrible Film, ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE From a Comic That Is Perhaps Unadaptable CONTEXT CBA, 5 March 2007



Author: [CalvinValjean](#)

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

I'm not sure if the Spawn comics really can be adapted to a film medium. To sum it up: you have a murdered CIA hit-man who makes a deal with a devil, comes back as deformed creature with strange powers, and has to deal with a psychotic demon in clown form. Umm, yeah. Maybe Sam Raimi or Guillermo Del Toro could've made such a film, but alas, they didn't, and the result is an inept production.

I'll start with the good points; John Leguizamo is perfect as the Clown **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**; both over the top and malevolent. **And a few of the visual effects are impressive FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. And there were a few nods to the comics (Sam and Twitch making a cameo at the end). But that's about it. Here's every other problem:

1. Michael Jai White just sucks as the lead. He's terrible **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. His interpretation of Spawn is not particularly heroic, or anti-heroic, or likable, or has any character moments, but is just an angry guy yelling: "I'mma gonna kill Wynn! Arrgg!! These powers rock!" **Gone are any of the philosophical underpinnings of the character COMPLEXITEIT**.

2. Hell and the devil Malebolia - laughable, laughable **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. **They could've at least animated the devil's mouth to move in sync with his voice. SUBTILITEIT** If this is hell, I just laugh at it. And for those who say "Hey, it was 1997; those were the visual effects of the time," I say look at Independence Day, Space Jam, and Titanic, all films made around the same time with superior effects. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

3. Martin Sheen, whom we all know is a good actor, adds little to the Wynn character. He concocts an idiotic plot about inserting a bomb in his heart, so that no one will dare kill him **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. This plot line isn't in the comics, but even if it was it would still've been idiotic. Doctors are really going to insert a bomb in someone's heart and not think: "Gee, this guy's gonna die someday, so there's no question this bomb will go off and kill people someday?" **SUBTILITEIT**

4. Child actor Miko Hughes shows up in a subplot, and has to look for Spawn's dog. WTF? It's like the producers realized "We should make this more family friendly by giving Spawn a kid sidekick," but then realized there really wasn't anything he could do, so they had him go look for a dog instead.

5. And after all this, we have a mess of a climax. Spawn fights off the Clown in Hell by transporting through the fireplace! **And then we get the big cliché about ending ORIGINALITEIT** with a shot of Spawn looking out on the city he will now protect. Please. **An unsatisfying ending ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, due to zero character development ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS** or reason to care about any of the "saving" that Spawn did throughout the movie.

But there is some good in the world POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR: after all, I walked out of this knowing that if any demonic Clown comes after me, I sure can count on Spawn to decapitate him for me. And if my dog ever runs away, I can count on Miko Hughes to find him for me. And if I ever get confused during a movie, I can count on Nicol Williamson's

tacked-on voice-over to provide exposition.

And finally, if I ever go to hell, I know I can look forward to a place filled with cartoon characters. YEE HEE!

Review 2:

A flawed but enjoyable absurdist horror-comic book film, 25 January 2005



Author: [Brandt Sponseller](#) from New York City

Al Simmons (Michael Jai White) is one of the top operatives for Jason Wynn (Martin Sheen), who is the head of an organization called A6. When Simmons becomes aware that A6 might be a little shady, he learns the hard way that he isn't allowed to quit A6. This leads to his transformation into Spawn, a superhero with a background and motivations that are just as morally ambiguous as A6. The film largely concerns Spawn discovering and exploring his new identity, while working to uncover a nefarious plot and attain revenge.

If you read my reviews frequently enough over time, you'll notice that my ratings often change on repeated viewings. My rating for Spawn has definitely gone down since my last viewing, but currently, I'm giving it a generous 8 out of 10. **There are a lot of things that are brilliant about the film GEBRUIK HAT**, at least for viewers with particular, odd tastes similar to mine, **but there are also too many unfortunate missteps to allow for a higher score POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR.**

Let's look at the missteps first. The main problem with the film is that screenwriter Alan McElroy and writer/director Mark A.Z. Dippe tried to squeeze far too much plot and too many characters into a 90-minute film **COMPLEXITEIT**. In retrospect, it would have been better to make one film covering everything up to Spawn's transformation (or the beginning of the transformation), and then save the other material (which comprises the bulk of the story here) for later films. **Maybe Todd McFarlane, who created the comic books upon which this film was based, was worried that he wouldn't receive funding for sequels REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**, so a multi-film plan wasn't attractive. As it is, there have been no live action sequels to date **(there have been animated versions of Spawn CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR)**, but I think there may have been if the first film would have been handled differently.

As the film stands, too much time has to be spent explaining the plot. **The A6 plot is complicated enough COMPLEXITEIT**, but there is a very high-concept idea behind the creation of Spawn that also has to be explained, too **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. Also, a lot of characters, most critically Cogliostro (Nicol Williamson--one of my favorite character actors), are basically wasted. There just isn't time to get into them.

A further problem is that both Sheen and White use odd affectations in their speech. I suppose it's supposed to be over-the-top in a comic book way, but on this last viewing, at least, it was more distracting to me **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Also, a lot of the cgi-heavy effects already look very dated **SUBTILITEIT**, and there's a weird cheesiness to most of the scenes in Hell. **ORIGINALITEIT** On the other hand, I personally like that kind of weird cheesiness, so I didn't subtract any points for that. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

And speaking of weird cheesiness, I'm sure a lot of people hate John Leguizamo's character in the film (Clown/Violator), **but I love it ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. It's exactly the kind of surreal campiness--part horror, part humor--that I cherish. As Mike Mayo has said, he's like (an evil) Krusty the Klown on acid. That works well for me, **but if you're not the kind of person who loves films like Killer Klowns from Outer Space (1988), you probably won't like this Killer Klown either. VOORSPELLING REACTIE PUBLIEK**

There is also a great campy quality to the material overall, including some of the dialogue (a scene where a father yells at a son in "Rat City" for spitting out a meal they retrieved from the garbage because it's "wasting good food" is a treasure). Spawn, the comic, is really a bizarre amalgamation of a number of different influences, from horror to twisted fairy tales, and the film is not afraid to indulge in that. **CONTEXT CBA**

The best part of the film, though, aside from Leguizamo's character, is Spawn as superhero. The costume and devices of the costume are fantastic, the cgi for the costume is excellent **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** (I especially loved the cape), and White (as well as the stunt person(s)) does a great job physically. All of the action sequences involving Spawn were incredible **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. I wanted to see a lot more of that kind of material. In fact, the visual style of the film overall is admirably creative, all the way down to the opening and ending credits. **ORIGINALITEIT**

In the end, the film teeters between being something that's "so bad, it's good" and being just a good film with some unfortunate flaws, but in either case, it's still very enjoyable to watch **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. You just need to approach it not expecting a realist dramatic masterpiece, but rather with a love for the absurd. **GEBRUIK HAT - CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**

Review 3:

"Spawn"-lite, 14 December 2006



Author: [dee.reid](#) from United States

"Spawn" is a special effects spectacle unlike anything before it. It has some dazzling CGI effects to complement its dark tone and breathe life into the Gothic fantasy **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, and wondrous cinematography to carry it out. **GEBRUIK HAT - SUBTILITEIT** Unfortunately, that's all it has to offer, which is a real shame, because this had the potential to be one hell (pun intended) of a movie. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

As a reader of "Spawn" comics and collector of "Spawn" merchandise (and affiliated McFarlane Toys products), I saw at an early age how "Spawn" revolutionized the comics industry with its mystical premise, graphic visuals, Heaven vs. Hell battle theme and gratuitous sex and violence, and while such gusto has been embraced by fans, this 1997 film adaptation of **CONTEXT CBA** Todd McFarlane's **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** popular underground comic, directed by Mark A.Z. Dippe', is rated "PG-13" (subsequent home video versions were of the "R"-rated director's cut, which contained additional footage), the watered-down violence more cartoonish than graphic. In short, in the comic book world, Spawn is not like anything else out there.

The story is that the demon Malebolgia needs fresh souls for his ever-growing army of undead soldiers to lead an eventual conquest of Earth, and then, Heaven, in what will eventually bring about Armageddon. All Malebolgia needs is a general for his army, and, Holy Lazarus, recently deceased CIA operative Al Simmons (newcomer Michael Jai White) has just the extra-crispy corpse for the job.

See, Simmons was set up by his insane former employer Jason Wynn (Martin Sheen) after making a bargain with Malebolgia's go-to guy and Earthbound lieutenant, the pudgy, disgusting Clown (John Leguizamo, completely unrecognizable in his get-up), to kill Simmons so that he would be sent to Hell. While in Hell (which looks like a CGI version of a Marilyn Manson concert on steroids), Simmons makes a deal with Malebolgia to lead his army, in exchange for one last chance to see his wife Wanda Blake (Theresa Randle), who is now married to his best friend Terry Fitzgerald (D.B. Sweeney) and together the two now have a

young daughter named Cyan (Sydni Beaudoin).

Back on Earth and unaware that five years have passed, Simmons has a burnt-to-a-crisp visage that doesn't sit well with people not accustomed to undead soldiers from Hell. He establishes sympathetic links with the homeless denizens of alley Rat City, chiefly young Zack (Miko Hughes), and is watched over by the Godsend Cogliostro (Nicol Williamson). When Simmons's body comes out of its larval stage and transforms him into a "Hellspawn," a being with an endoplasmic and invincible suit of armor, he sees his chance to use these new powers to exact vengeance on Wynn, his lethal vixen Jessica Priest (Melinda Clarke), reunite with Wanda, and seek a way to break out of his agreement with Hell. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

As stated earlier, "Spawn" is one hell of a special effects spectacle, and it looks great, **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** but a lot goes wrong in too many places. I was dazzled to see one of my favorite superheroes on the screen nearly 10 years ago as an impressionable pre-teen. Now at 21, I am sorely disappointed by what I see today. "Spawn" still could have been good, even without with the full-on graphic content and Heaven & Hell mysticism of the source material. **While a largely accurate reflection of the comics CONTEXT CBA**, it still gives more credence to my assertion that this is "Spawn"-lite. Presumably, studio bosses weren't keen on marketing a Hellbound superhero to the masses, so measures were probably taken to make the vehicle more accessible. (Take my advice and stick to the animated HBO miniseries.)

On the plus side, Michael Jai White makes an efficient hero and this remains the actor's most well-known part **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. **We do feel his pain (even if it seems forced at times) EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT**, his quips, and overall faithful portrayal of the character. Sheen makes for a coolly sadistic madman but it's Leguizamo who steals the show. His gross-out-humor, maggot-munching portrayal of the Clown is just what takes this movie out of the dregs and into full-blown camp territory. **Lastly, the soundtrack, a mix of heavy metal and techno, does have some pretty wicked sounds. CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

It's easy to see that only core fans will want to stick with this picture. It had such a great chance to be something unlike anything else out there. With the comic book craze still in full swing in Hollywood, "Spawn" seems forgotten, or at the very least, sitting on the sidelines. But "Spawn," to me, seems to be an example of mis-marketing, a brilliant idea gone haywire. Maybe it should have stayed in Hell, where it belongs.

Review 4:

Did you ever want to see a movie really bad, then were really dissapointed by it?

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, 19 June 2002



Author: [Chris Brown \(christopher6453@hotmail.com\)](mailto:christopher6453@hotmail.com) from Fresno, CA USA

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

That's how I felt about Spawn. I had heard about this movie for a long time, it looked really good, and I just didn't like it that much. **Let's start with the good things about the film POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. **The special effects and CGI images were very cool FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. John Leguizamo (who played The Clown) was funny; in fact he was the best part of the film. And the entire look of the film I liked, it reminded me of The Crow, which is one of my favorite movies.

Now the bad things about Spawn. **First the plot didn't make any sense to me COMPLEXITEIT**. Spawn is a man named Al Simmons who, when alive, killed people for the U.S. government. One day he decides he wants to quit, his boss (Martin Sheen) say ok, but then doubles crosses him and kills him. Five years later Simmons comes back to life. This is where it gets a

little strange. Did he come back to life? Is he dead but back on Earth for revenge? Where exactly is he? It seems like he's right around the corner from where he used to live, but it never gets explained. **And as good as the CGI was, some of it was too fast and unclear** **SUBTILITEIT**.

The big fight scene in Hell just flew by, and it was very hard to see what was going on and who was fighting who. I remember sitting on my couch squinting, just trying to see what was happening. Even the opening credit sequence gave me a headache. These days studios are making films that look good, are filled with special effects, but have little or no story, and that's just not good enough anymore.

Spawn had the ability to be a great movie. It was a hot character, the look of the movie was great, and the idea behind the character works, but the story has got to be stronger. When the best lines in the film are, "Damn" and "Hell yeah", there's a problem. And what was up with the guy in the hat? **I know what he was there for, to tell the story and to help Spawn realize bad from good, but he wasn't in most of the film, and when it came to crunch time, he failed.** **INTERPRETATIE** I'm a little tired of movies that look good but have no story. **At least make the main characters people I can care about.** **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** I really didn't care if Spawn lived or died hell most of the time I wished he would join the dark side just to make the movie a little more adventurous. **ONTROERING** I have never read the comics, or seen the television show, but I hope they have a plot. If they make a sequel, I hope the first thing they do is write a good story.

Review 5:

Not horrible, but not good either **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**., 2 April 2009



Author: [Deathhawk](#) from United States

I knew going in to it Spawn had a terrible reputation attached to it, but I just couldn't help myself. I figured it couldn't be all that bad so I added this to my netflix queue and long story short: no it really isn't that great a movie.

Spawn tells the story of Al Simmons a assassin working for the US government, he's one of the best and this doesn't escape the notice of the forces of hell, who arrange his company to kill him on his final mission. From their the devil plans to make him a soldier in his army of hellspawns to take on heaven's forces in the final battle known as Armageddon. But as a free thinking agent Spawn has the ability to decide his own fate. Will he choose to bring about Armageddon or will he defy Satan and all of his fellow Hellspawns.

One of the things that strikes you immediately about Spawn is how poorly it's aged: The hell effects for instance are basically a joke now **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**. While there are some creative effects outside of hell, **it's nothing really that spectacular** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**: at this point you've probably seen much better. **Roger Ebert rated this highly on the basis of effects alone but considering all the special effects tour de-forces that came before it,** **they're nothing really worth writing home about** **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**.

The best part of this movie is when Spawn is fighting however, he's got lots of superpowers and at times feels almost too powerful, but it's still something we, as an audience don't quite get enough of. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** This falls into the genre trap of not giving us enough fight scenes for our buck and that's a shame, as these scenes could of changed my opinion of the movie.

Actually scratch that more fight scenes probably wouldn't of changed my opinion of this

movie due in part to Clown, played by John Leguizamo this is one of the stupidest, most annoying characters ever put on film. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE He serves as Spawn's mentor so he's practically in every scene holding the movie back considerably. It's an odd choice as he seems to be in the film for comic relief and often makes fart and poop jokes which don't seem appropriate for this type of movie HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID. Overall Spawn is probably not as bad as you've heard it was but it's still not a good movie, there aren't nearly enough action scenes, the special effects are dated SUBTILITEIT, and John Leguizamo's character is severely annoying. Rent it if you must but don't expect a good time or anything.

5 User generated reviews: Blade

Review 1:

Close as a "Blade" or your money back. (eh, why not?), 4 January 1999



Author: [W. Travis Richey \(siv_art@hotmail.com\)](mailto:siv_art@hotmail.com) from Minneapolis, MN

Now here is a movie that does something that hasn't been done in a long time. It take ten or so different elements that we're already familiar with (Vampires, martial arts, a techno beat, top-o-the-line special effects, etc.) CONENCTIE POP CULTUUR, and turns it into something that feels brand new. In what could have easily been merely a combination of "Mortal Kombat" and "Buffy: The Vampire Slayer," CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR Wesley Snipes (no favorite of mine since and mostly because of "Passenger 57") gives a really good turn as the half human/ half bloodsucker. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT He acknowledges the internal conflict, but doesn't dwell on it more than necessary. He makes Blade as deep a character COMPLEXITEIT as Michael Keaton made Batman.

I'll say that the only part of the movie that got me a little miffed was the always present horror movie POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR cliché ORIGINALITEIT of that one person that the hero happens to know who happens to know exactly how to stop the evil guy. On the other hand, you sort of have to have that in a movie like this, so it's easily excusable.

Well, Snipes is good. And Steven Dorff, hyped in the previews, makes a more than bad enough bad guy to Snipes' hero FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. He's got class, presence, and enough control in his little pinky to teach Al Pacino how to tone it down a bit. Who would ever think that a comic book movie would be a launching pad for an actor? I sincerely hope this is. And whoa! ENTERTAINMENTERAVRING where the heck did Kris Kristofferson get acting talent? Don't get me wrong, but the prolific actor hasn't done anything memorable since "Millennium," and how many of us watched that just 'cause of the cool video box? Well, here he is, folks, in a very Obi-wanish turn, as Blade's mentor and father figure. And good job, too.

The quality of the acting is matched by the quality of the choreography SUBTILITEIT and special effects. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL Accompanied by a pulsing techno beat, the fight scenes brings back and quickly banish memories of Mortal Kombat VERGELIJKING FILMS. Hey! It had a script, too! I was wondering what had happened to all the good writers out there.

The two major indications to me that I saw a quality flick were these; I had no feeling of remorse about paying full price to get in, in any Schumacher "Batman," "The Avengers," "MK: Annihilation," "Godzilla," or "Armageddon." (wow, how many of those came out this year? Ugh) Also, I look forward to the inevitable sequel, as per the film's ending. Let's just hope they do as good a job with it as with the first one.

Review 2:

Blade A Decent Vampire Movie, 15 June 2009



Author: [tburke85](#) from United States

Blade is a decent vampire movie from director Stephen Norrington REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD who does a good job in making this but the lack of suspense SPANNING/SUSPENS, the dialogue at times, and a rushed finale are what weigh it down. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

COMMENTAAR The film does however offer just enough cool martial arts action **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**, impressive special effects **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, and solid performances by the cast. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Wesley Snipes is admirable in the title role of Blade a half-human half-vampire who becomes humanity's protector from the sinister forces that threaten their world. Snipes is believable in the role especially in the action/fight sequences. **SUBTILITEIT** Stephen Dorff is effective as the villain Deacon Frost but he isn't given much to except for a few action sequences and his showdown with Blade at the end is sort of a let down. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** Kris Kristofferson, N'Bushe Wright, and Donal Logue are good as the supporting characters in their limited screen time. Udo Kier and Traci Lords show up for brief appearances but neither of them ever get the chance to leave an impression. The action/fight sequences are well executed featuring fierce bone crushing moves but the final fight between Blade and Frost was a bit disappointing compared to the ones that came before it. The dialogue wasn't the greatest at times either and the lack of suspense weighed down a bit but everything else made up for **SUBTILITEIT** its flaws. Despite its problems Blade is a decent adaption of a comic book **CONTEXT CBA** with enough impressive martial arts action, cool special effects, and solid performances by most of the cast who make it worth watching if only the film had been a little better I would've enjoyed it more than I did.

Review 3:

Slice Blade, 2 November 2009



Author: [thesar-2](#) from United States

'Blade' would be an extremely above-average comic-book, vampire-hunter action/horror if it weren't for two minor flaws. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR #1** I loved seeing the all-but invincible Blade/Snipes do his slicing and dicing **SUBTILITEIT**, but the whole "Yes!" fist/punch was literally a letdown. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE #2** Bad, no make that horrible, CGI – even for 1998 standards. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** This is mainly in the last third, but some sprinkled throughout. Okay, despite those minor infractions, I really enjoyed this movie **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. All actors did a suburb job and the fact that **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** this now looks like yet another 'Matrix' rip-off is hilarious considering this came out one year prior. So maybe 'The Matrix' copied 'Blade.' At any rate, it's a very movie for multiple genre-loving audiences: **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Comic Book geeks, action fanatics and horror/vampire lovers. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** So, we have Blade, half-man/half-vampire, or "day-walker" and his accompish, Whisler (a la "Batman and Alfred") battling the undead who, apparently almost out number humans. Who knew? In a rare act of humanity (Blade's more of an antihero) our sword ninja/vamp rescues a newly infected (coincidentally) blood specialist/doctor. Meanwhile, trouble brews amongst the vampires as one wants (you guessed it) supreme power and needs Blade somehow to obtain it. It's not the most original concept, if you read what I just wrote, but still highly enjoyable **ORIGINALITEIT**. You will want to see Blade succeed, you will root for him despite his imperfections and mannerisms **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. And you will know what's coming as this is the typical act 1-2-3 of a comic book introduction movie. Still, watch this without trying to go too deep. Such as Vampire SPF-1000 "suntan lotion"? Really? What about the scalp? Wouldn't that still burn? **COMPLEXITEIT** Just like the money they burn for weapons? Uh, okay, I am going too deep. Once again, sit back and enjoy the techno-charged fun ride.

Review 4:

A Decent Hero/ Vampire Flick, 18 July 2009



Author: [landeros-joshua](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

Overall, I give this film a decent 7.6. To start I'll say I love how the character was portrayed and adapted on to the screen. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE If you read comics occasionally or simply watch DVD extras you'll see the Blade character is drastically different from the one we see in the film. CONTEXT CBA Among the changes, Blade is now most importantly half vampire, therefore acquiring "all of their strengths, but none of their weaknesses." The credit for this goes obviously to David Goyer, a fellow fan of the darker genre of comic books. Thanks to him Blade has become a much more interesting character and I find him one of my favorite anti-heroes really. Wesley Snipes is born to play this role, although some would've probably preferred Dezenel Washington or Will Smith (lol). His acting here doesn't need to be exactly Oscar winning per say considering the character but I'm glad he decides to play the DayWalker in the two sequels FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Also starring is Stephen Dorff as our main villain and Kris Kristofferson as Blade's Alfred so to speak. The acting is good actually and the action keeps the plot going for sure. The opening scene in the club is one of my favorite parts I've got to say. As much as like this movie there are few things that bother me which take away from this film ranking with something like "Spider-Man" or "X-Men". POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR Stephen Norrington REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD had the villains portrayed in a way I didn't like so much honestly. Their lines were so full of foul mouthed comedy it didn't really feel like a comic book film to me HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID. Plus "La Magra" a bit disappointing as the final villain but the intense SPANNING/SUSPENS sword fight makes up for it I guess. Not to mention a sense of extra non-realism: a black man in a leather coat with a sword beheading the #\$\$%^ out of a cop in broad day light some how going unnoticed by the crowds walking by seemed kinda..well...dumb SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT. Moving away from a few of its flaws, the music by Mark Isham was great and fitted the film nicely. CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR Luckily all these problems are fixed and improved on in the stunning sequel, "Blade 2".

Review 5:

Fighting Modern Vampires in the Big City, 4 February 2006



Author: [Bogmeister](#) from United States

It's a glimpse into how Hollywood works and thinks that, with all the primo Marvel super-heroes to choose from, even including 2nd-tier heroes like Luke Cage & the Panther, the first successful big budget Marvel film is based on an obscure supporting character from the little-known 'Tomb of Dracula' comic book CONTEXT CBA. The key to the success was upgrading the Blade (Snipes) character to be a cool bad-ass in the big city, with neat weapons and wardrobe, not to mention super powers lacking in the original comic book version. On initial glance, the movie could be a standard action thriller from the nineties, but director Norrington REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD imbued this with enough style and mythology to make this a cut above most of those. SUBTILITEIT Rather than an old Gothic atmosphere, everything points towards the modern, the sleek. The actual 'Dracula' character isn't present; instead there's an entire secret cabal of vampires, ruling in secret - for one reason or another it seems all of the police force is employed by them. There are different 'grades' of vampire in this story - those born as vamps and those turned. The so-called pure bloods form a ruling council. They exist in an unspecified truce with human bigwigs i.e. politicians - which comes as no surprise, I suppose - all bloodsuckers would support one another, right?

Also borrowed from the comic books is the villain vampire Frost (Dorff), portrayed as an elder man in the books, but here a turned arrogant punk aiming to change the status quo CONTEXT CBA. The more interesting aspects of the story have to do with the internal conflict among the new age and the older generation of vampires, not the usual battles between humans and vampire monsters. Blade himself is not really human, being a kind of hybrid,

having the strengths of a typical vampire and none of their weaknesses (sunlight, garlic). His fights are martial arts-influenced, with the added FX shots of his opponents disintegrating as a fatal blow is struck. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** Some dark amusement is provided by Donal Logue as Frost's no.2 vamp, never quite getting that killing blow from Blade, just losing a limb every other scene. Logue and Dorff, tho, never seem quite in sync in their scenes together, with Logue stressing the humor and Dorff playing it very straight **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. But they manage, in conjunction, to provide the necessary menace for Blade and his allies to stand against.

The film veers a bit into inane territory for the climax, when Frost is planning to unleash something called 'La Magra' on the world, which I believe was meant to turn everyone into vampires. Instead of the planned 'blood god' FX, we get a souped-up version of vampirism in Frost and some extra martial arts effort from Blade to wrap things up. Snipes is stolid as the hero, letting loose a grin every now and then when the prospect of graphic violence rises up. He and fellow vampire-killer Whistler (Kristofferson) are supposedly close friends but you get the impression they're together only because they both hate vampires. It's a rather somber unemotional world they both exist in, with nothing more than resolute soldiering a guiding force. Blade would continue to soldier on in two sequels.

5 User generated reviews: From hell

Review 1:

Darkly stylish **SUBTILITEIT**--not based on reality., 17 May 2004



Author: [Jennifer Keenan](#) from Burlington, Ontario

The best thing about an enduring mystery is that people can feel free to take all sorts of liberties with the facts and create interesting "what if" scenarios. FROM HELL is a perfect example. For the record, the theory behind the killings is pretty much right out of JACK THE RIPPER: THE FINAL SOLUTION by Stephen Knight and it's been pretty well discredited since it first came out twenty years ago, even though it makes a hell of an entertaining piece of fiction. **ENTERTAINMENTVARING**

I completely discount any criticisms of the movie where people say "it didn't happen that way". Of course it didn't; that's why this is a fictional film and not a documentary. It's very loosely based on the Alan Moore graphic novel, and about all it retains of it is the Duke of Clarence theory and the stylish look of the architecture **CONTEXT CBA**. It's enough to make the film beautiful to watch.

Yes, I know that four of the five victims of Jack the Ripper were women in their late 40's, which on the streets of Victorian London would mean that they would resemble crones in their late 60's or early 70's. Just try to make that fly past a Hollywood studio boss; the casting at least had women who looked fairly human rather than like fallen glamour girls. I've read a couple of comments disparaging the accents. Actually, Cockney accents were the norm in the street because people tried to blend in and often weren't eager to advertise Scottish or Irish origins. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

I call special attention to the performance of Jason Flemyng in the role of Netley, the coachman, arguably the most fascinating and believable character in the whole production **FOCUS ACRTEURS TALENT**. Most of his best scenes ended up on the cutting room floor, unfortunately, and yet he still manages to pull the movie together into a cohesive whole just by his presence. (It must have been a heck of a fun role to play!) As well, Sir Ian Holm deserves special mention for stepping in when the original choice for his role, Sir Nigel Hawthorne, tragically became ill and died just before the film went into production **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN ACTEURS**. I have never seen Sir Ian in any role that I didn't find completely believable, and that ranges all the way from KING LEAR to his role in ALIEN, for heaven's sake.

My interest in the whole Jack the Ripper case has been reawakened thanks to this movie, and I'm trying to hunt down a copy of Alan Moore's graphic novel (which is very difficult to find). No, it's not even close to an approximation of what really happened; nobody will ever know the truth, Patricia Cornwell's arrogant claims notwithstanding. It's still worth renting, if only for the beautifully ominous score and the fascinating transformation of Prague into Victorian London. I thoroughly enjoyed it **ENTERTAINEMENTWAARDE**.

Review 2:

"FROM HELL is a dark, compelling horror film **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE...** that will stay in your mind for days after watching., 2 December 2001



Author: [Steve Szyk](#) from New York, USA

I had always been fascinated by the story of Jack the Ripper, but surprisingly this was my first film based on the story. From Hell is an outstanding mystery and a dark, moody film **SUBTILITEIT**.

This is the type of film that sticks in your mind days after seeing it. You'll have the image of old Whitechapel in your head. You'll have the terrific murder scenes stuck in your head, but most of all you'll have the image of Jack the Ripper in your head **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. From Hell will disturb you. It might scare you, and it might even bore you (action fans will not enjoy this film **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**). From Hell is certainly not for everyone, but it certainly was for me.

Johnny Depp is fantastic. He is one of my favorite actors, and certainly delivers the goods in From Hell. His performance is perfect, and one of his bests yet **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Heather Graham also does a fine job in From Hell. I was surprised with her performance. I'll admit, when I heard she was going to be in the film, I was worried. I mean who doesn't get worried when they find out the same actress who was in Austin Powers 2 is going to be in a Jack the Ripper film. But she did surprise me, although I still think she could have done better.

The Hughes brothers direct this film with such style **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**. The use of colors in the film is beautiful, as is the use of lighting. The camera angles are crazy, and the film turns out a beauty. **SUBTILITEIT** Trevor Jones' score is great (As a matter of fact, I'm listening to it now), and fits the film perfectly **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. The music is eerie, creepy, and scary. It's flawless. **SPANNING/SUSPENS**

The murder mystery is also great. It keeps you guessing the whole way through (I was not successful in guessing who Jack was), **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** and when the killer is revealed, it all makes sense. And let me tell you, From Hell is violent! Although not as gory as I expected it to be, it'll still make you cringe (that throat slash!). **ONTROERING** A lot of the violence takes place off screen, which lets your imagination run wild, and mine did just that (My head was filled with tons of gory images).

A lot of people call From Hell boring. I can see how they think that, but I disagree completely with that. Sure the film is slow moving, but how fast can a murder mystery movie be? I didn't get bored with the film at all... I was completely absorbed in the film **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. Another problem people found with this film was the love story, which I have to agree with. Had the love story been more developed, the ending would have been much more depressing, **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS** as we would have felt for the characters more (This could be what kept the film from an A+ rating).

As I said before From Hell is great. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** It is my 3rd favorite film of the year, and my second favorite horror film (this year). It's a dark, compelling film, that is **NOT FUN!** There is no comic relief **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**, it's all horror **SPANNING/SUSPENS**. Had it been a little more scary, and had the love story been more developed this film would be an A+. I highly recommend fans stay away, because you'll hate it. this film to fans of Jack the Ripper, and horror fans with patience. Action **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**

Review 3:

A bizarre murder mystery, 26 July 2003



Author: [strangerzero](#) from united states

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

From Hell (2001) is quite a bizarre murder mystery. Then again, the real Jack the Ripper is still to this day a mystery, with his identity forever unknown. This film offers a theory as to the identity, and it looks like it could have worked. The film goes like this:

Inspector Fred Abberline (Johnny Depp) is a detective in London who has a special gift for

discovering murders. He also does opium in his spare time and is a wreck ever since his wife died while trying to give birth to their baby. Along with his co-worker/friend Godley (Robbie Coltrane), Abberline is charged with solving the murder case that has terrorized London's streets: the Jack the Ripper case. The Ripper is killing prostitutes and dismembering them. Abberline attends one prostitute's funeral in hopes of finding any clue. It's there that he meets Mary Kelly (Heather Graham), a prostitute who doesn't sleep with anyone. He also meets her friends and begins to search for clues. He contacts Sir William Gull (Ian Holm), a surgeon for the Queen, and gains medical knowledge of the victims. Specifically, Abberline and Gull both realize that the killer has an extensive knowledge of surgery. Meanwhile the Ripper is stalking the streets with driver Netley (Jason Flemyng), who's deeply troubled with the murders. As the dead bodies begin to pile up, Abberline discovers that all of Mary's friends are the victims. And as Abberline starts to fall in love with Mary, he realizes that she will be the next victim. He desperately looks for the identity of the killer, but the answer may prove to be more dangerous than expected.

Johnny Depp is perfect as the troubled Abberline, though the real Abberline didn't do opium. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** The real Abberline also had a different fate from the one in the movie. Heather Graham was a bit unbelievable as Mary, partly because she's supposed to be a prostitute yet she refuses to have sex with anyone. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT**. Also, it's kind of funny how she manages to stay clean all the time while living on the street. **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. And her accent is kind of crappy. Robbie Coltrane is always a pleasure to view in any film. Ian Holm also does a good job as Gull.

The film explores more than just the Ripper case, but more of what was happening around that time in history. So expect subplots a plenty. Also, the proposed identity of Jack the Ripper is believable but at the same time doesn't feel right. The world may never know who this killer is.

Albert and Allen Hughes did a great job of bringing the graphic novel to life. **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**. There was a sense of dread and death around each street corner. The violence in the film is mostly after-viewings of the murder victims, while some of the gory images are of the Ripper in the act. Many people die in this film, and not just the Ripper victims. Also, the ending was admittedly cheesy, especially since it doesn't follow what happens in real life. **ORIGINALITEIT** But that's Hollywood for you. I give From Hell a 6.5 out of 10.

Review 4:

Not As Good As I Thought It Would Be, 21 February 2009



Author: [cheshire551225800](#) from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

If I hadn't read large quantities of Anne Perry's books (Pitt & Monk Mysteries) set in this time period, I might have found the blatant class discrimination in the investigation of the Ripper Case appalling. Also, she has exposed the warfare between the Monarchists/Masons and everybody else who wanted change.

If she hadn't already exposed the class discrimination that led decent women to have no choice to stay alive but to prostitute themselves and their horrific treatment in general let alone at the hands of the Ripper, I might also have found this shocking.

But the addition of Johnny Depp's psychic detective was wasted which is way too bad because he is generally better than this. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Robbie Coltrane was wasted too and the substitution of Shakespearian quotes for his dialogue just got annoying.

after awhile. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

This confused retelling COMPLEXITEIT of the theory that one of the Royal Sons of Queen Victoria was the ripper or the cover up blah blah mixed with the supposed secret Catholic marriage (which I was under the impression was the rumour about George IV when he was still the Prince of Wales and Maria Fitzherbert during the Regency period) doesn't make any sense. COMPLEXITEIT

To make matters weirder they say that the Prince used the name Albert Sickert and the disguise of being a painter which is a nod to the alternate major ripper theory that the ripper was Walter Sickert, an established painter and amateur thespian with a mutilated penis from a childhood botched surgery and a major grudge against women who represented sexuality (hookers) because he couldn't actually have sex. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK

Heather Graham did a better job with the accent than I thought she would although when she went home to Ireland you would think she would let her Irish accent come out rather than stick to cockney. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

This movie might be considered a needed dose of historically accurate social class prejudice revelation for those who didn't already know (which includes most Americans) INTERPRETATIE but if I want me some real Depp action I will just watch Johnny in the brilliant "Ninth Gate" again. VERGELIJKING FILMS

Review 5:

Victorian London via Hollywood, 22 October 2001

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

Author: [Nigel St. Bugging](#) from Seattle, WA

Going into this film, I had to realize that I am a great fan of the graphic novel; I consider it to be one of the great works of graphic storytelling, along with "The Dark Knight Returns" and "Watchmen". CONTEXT CBA It is, therefore, somewhat difficult to put aside any bias I might have had toward this film from the beginning. I did try, but it certainly didn't make it easy.

First, just to start off light, for the good points: the film is visually quite arresting SUBTILITEIT. The sets, the cinematography, the camera work, all work together to create a very interesting vision of 1880's London SUBTILITEIT. It isn't what you'd call a realistic vision, but it is interesting nonetheless. Unfortunately, visually stylistic films are a dime a dozen these days. It takes more than that to impress. GEBRUIK HAT

Sadly, the film doesn't have much else. The Hughes brothers REGISSEUR BENOEMD are obviously quite familiar with the novel, but sadly, they've only picked out the seedy trappings of it, and left out what really made it work. Where the novel extensively examined the world in which Jack went about his work, CONTEXT CBA the film ditches all of that and settles instead on a standard murder mystery. We've seen this story a hundred times in countless modern serial killer thrillers. By keeping the identity of Jack a mystery, and following the investigations of Inspector Abberline, they have reduced the story to something very drab and unoriginal. ORIGINALITEIT

Among the worst touches is Abberline's psychic ability. The "vision" sequences are more annoyingly modern than creepy SPANNING/SUSPENS, and really don't seem to help him much in his investigations, or aid the story in its journey. They simply add an unwelcome supernatural element to events based (however loosely) on reality. I can only imagine that the film-makers' intention was to combine two characters from the novel. However, the novel's "psychic" admitted to being a fraud. So why is this here? CONTEXT CBA

A Hollywood product mentality is found throughout the production. While the supporting whore roles are filled out very believably, **SUBTILITEIT** Heather Graham is instead cast in the role of the "Friday The 13th" virgin who is immune to harm because we never see her engaging in sex. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** She stands out like a sore thumb among the grime with her colorful dress and pretty hair and makeup. They've done away with Abberline's marriage in order to make way for a romance with Heather Graham's "whore". And the mistaken-identity ending sets up a conclusion so saccharine as to belong in a Shirley Temple movie.

In the end "From Hell" turns out to be nothing more than a standard Hollywood serial killer movie with the words "Jack the Ripper" inserted into it. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** 5 out of 10.

5 User generated reviews: Road to Perdition

Review 1:

Among the most beautiful films in history, 11 October 2004

★★★★★★★★

Author: [ctuavocado](#) from San Jose CA

Acting This film is a very well acted film **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. I will say that the performances are slightly weak at times; but for the most part, the acting is very good **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. The only actor that blew me away with his performance was Jude Law as Harlen Maguire. He was incredible! Tom Hanks seemed a little unsure at a few points throughout the film but he too was incredible **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Paul Newman, good as always. Cinematography This is what made **SUBTILITEIT** the movie a masterpiece (and I rarely use that word) **GEBRUIK HAT – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. Conrad Hall is a true genius. **GEBRUIK HAT** If at any point in the movie you were to pause it, you will see the delicately crafted work of this man. He sets up every shot so that nothing is left out. When the camera is still, there is a postcard like quality to the screen. When the camera is moving, every shot is planned to understated perfection. But it doesn't stop there. **Conrads choice of colors and contrast between light and dark settings is a work of art** **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. The way he lights the set is some of the most amazing lighting work I've seen. His work on this movie made it what it is. This movie is at the top of the list **for best Cinematography with LOTR, Black Hawk Down, Hero, CTHD, Moulin Rouge, and Vertigo**. **SUBTILITEIT – VERGELIJKING FILMS** Story People will say this movie is a 1930s gangster flick but, I believe they missed the point of the movie. It is a love story about a hit-man who fails in trying to protect his son from the life he chose. It is a brilliantly crafted story that unfolds into a beautiful bond between two people who have nothing but each other. The screen Writing is worthy of an Oscar. Music **Thomas Newman conducts a sad but hopeful score** **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** to intensify this sad but hopeful story **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. The music is some of the most beautiful and moving scores I've heard. **Direction Sam Mendes is a new director with a feel of an experienced director** **REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD**. The symbols he uses and the performances he gets from his actors is a rarity in today's film-making world. I will be on the lookout for the next Sam Mendes Film. 10/10 one of the most moving and beautiful movies I've ever seen.

Review 2:

A Rolls-Royce Movie, 13 July 2002

★★★★★★★★

Author: [MICHAEL O'FARRELL \(mpofarrell\)](#) from Albany, NY

If you thought Sam Mendes' first film, the much heralded American BEAUTY was a movie with style to spare, wait until you see his highly anticipated second effort, the unrelentingly grim 30's gangster melodrama ROAD TO PERDITION. Some critics have hailed this new movie as a worthy successor to THE GODFATHER, a rash judgment made by several reviewers taken with Mr. Mendes' extraordinary technical prowess. If the mechanics of movie making are what make a picture great, then yes, **ROAD TO PERDITION is a distant cousin to THE GODFATHER in terms of what it achieves in cinematography, editing, music scoring and** **SUBTILITEIT- GEBRUIK HAT – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST** sound. What it doesn't have is a resonance that all great stories and some very rare movies have that stay with the viewer long after the experience of reading or seeing it is over. **As with American BEAUTY, there is a cold, distancing feel to this movie, despite some very tense scenes involving paternal love, loyalty and betrayal.** **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

This story of a hit man (Tom Hanks) and his relationship to a surrogate father - figure who is also his boss, an elderly Irish mob leader (Paul Newman) , seems to have been culled from innumerable gangster movies of years past. The father /son motif that hangs over this picture is so heavy handed in its treatment that there is not much room for spontaneity ; the entire

enterprise has been very carefully wrought , and nearly all the dialog is delivered with an air of great portent ; this is obviously a gangster film , hence the requisite amount of violence and bloodshed , but the film is nearly devoid of any humor to speak of HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID ; only in scenes involving a young boy driving a getaway car in a cunningly edited montage is there any sense of lightheartedness to leaven the pervasive sense of doom. GEBRUIK HAT

That being said , I have nothing but the highest praise for the stunning look of this film ; indeed , it is not an overstatement to say that this is one of the most beautifully photographed and designed movies I have ever seen. SUBTILITEIT – PSOTIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR Veteran cameraman Conrad Hall will very likely win another Oscar for his work here . The production 's sets and costumes are just as exemplary ; in fact , the entire film is a technical marvel. Mr. Mendes continues to astonish with his vivid use of color, and he and Mr. Hall again make very dramatic use of red blood splattered against pale colored walls , all the more effective and disconcerting due to the preponderance of blacks, blues and grays that dominate the movie's color scheme. CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST

If I have failed to duly note the acting , it is not because the actors do not purport themselves ably ; everyone in the film is top notch, with special mention going to the two malevolent bad guys : Daniel Craig is the classic "man you love to hate", the spoiled, impulsive son of Newman's gangster father ; and an almost unrecognizable Jude Law as an especially slimy miscreant who goes on pursuit of Hanks and his son and figures very importantly in the film's riveting second half FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. But acting in a movie this dazzling is bound to take a back seat to the photographic fireworks on display here. If a Rolls-Royce was a movie , I've no doubt it would look like ROAD TO PERDITION. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 3:

One of the greatest movies of all time ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, 23 July 2002

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [tutzauer](#) from Buffalo, NY

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

Having been driven out of the house and into the theater by the sweltering heat, I could not have been more pleased. The Road to Perdition, directed by Sam Mendes REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD (American Beauty), is destined to become one of the greatest movies of all time. Perhaps I'm just getting old; perhaps I've just seen the same themes recycled time and again. But this movie is indeed different.

The story opens with young Michael Sullivan Jr. facing out to the sea, contemplating the duality of his father's legacy -- one of the best men to ever live, one of the most evil. This duality snakes its way throughout the movie. The story revolves around crime boss John Rooney (Paul Newman) and Michael Sullivan (Tom Hanks), the young man Rooney once took in and who now serves as his personal "Angel of Death." Rooney is tied by blood to his own son, but tied by love and loyalty to Michael. Young Michael Jr., intrigued by the stories he reads, steals away in his father's car one night while Dad goes off to "work" with Connor Rooney, heir to the family "business." Connor lets the situation get out of hand, and what was meant only to be a warning turns into murder -- witnessed by Michael Jr. Upon the discovery that young Michael has seen what he should not have seen, the plot is set in motion as conflicting loyalties collide. Soon, Michael Sr. is on the run with his young son, pursued by contract killer Harlen "The Reporter" Maguire (Jude Law).

I will disclose no further details in order to avoid any potential spoilers. However, I strongly encourage viewers to examine the many dualities that present themselves in the movie: Problems between sons and fathers (Michael Sr & Jr., John Rooney & son Connor), between the world at home and the world at "work", between good and evil, between those who

pretend to be men of god and those who really are, between "clean" money and "dirty", between the town of Perdition and Perdition as hell. **INTERPRETATIE** And along the way, savor the visual brilliance of cinematographer Conrad L. Hall (9 nominations, 2 oscars for best cinematography): rain pouring off fedoras, shots through mirrors (especially on swinging doors), tommy-gun flashes from out of the shadows, absent any sound **SUBTILITEIT**. Not only has 75-year-old Hall given us perhaps the best cinematic product of his career, but 77-year-old Paul Newman offers one of his best performances ever. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Yes ... I may be getting old. But I've seen a lot ... **and this is fresh and invigorating ORIGINALITEIT**. The Road to Perdition presents a lasting and loving tribute to the gangster genre, to films of the 40s, to dark comic-book figures lurking in the darkness, to villains and heroes, to American film in general. Go see it!

Review 4:

This is the Road to Greatness, 6 July 2005

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [moviemana](#) from Massachusetts

Tom Hanks has been in such hit movies as Forrest Gump, Saving Private Ryan, and The Green Mile. For the most part, his roles have been good guys that we cheer for. In Road to Perdition, his character Michael Sullivan is a little bit different.

In Sam Mendes' film Road to Perdition based on the graphic novel by Max Allan Collins, he shows the story of a man and his son on the road during the Great Depression in Chicago **CONTEXT CBA**. What is different about this little road trip is that Sullivan is a hit-man who is now being hunted by his former partner. His boss or ex-boss John Rooney (Paul Newman) loves him almost more than his own son, Sullivan's partner Connor (Daniel Craig).

After a job done the wrong way because of Connor, the only witness to his mistake are Sullivan and his son who wasn't supposed to be there. So Connor tries to take out Sullivan and his family, but only gets the wife and other son Peter. Sullivan outsmarts the hit and rushes home to find Michael Jr. sitting at the table...just sitting. With his wife and child dead, Sullivan takes to the road to find answers.

The story follows the two as Sullivan tries to make things right in memory of his wife and kid, and for Michael who feels like he is to blame for all this. He feels his curiosity killed his mother and brother. Tyler Hoechlin does a terrific job as Michael Jr. He brings maturity and also a sense of still being juvenile. His loss of innocence is well acted out as he travels from town to town, leaving nothing behind him. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Mendes' previous hit film was American Beauty which received five Oscars including Best Picture and Best Director. This film didn't do nearly as well at the Oscars only winning one award for best cinematography but receiving five other nominations for music, sound, and a Best Actor in a Supporting Role for Paul Newman **SUBTILITEIT**. This picture is a great story **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** that takes you on a ride through the Midwest and into the legend of Mike Sullivan: husband, hit-man, and devoted father **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. This movie is a sleeper film that should be watched for years to come.

Review 5:

Strong film, but not a masterpiece **GEBRUIK HAT**, 29 March 2003

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [Senator Corleone](#) from Austin, Texas

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

SPOILER WARNING-MULTIPLE SPOILERS FOLLOW

Tom Hanks has gotten to a stage in his career where he is so uniformly excellent in everything he does that it's beginning to diminish his impact. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** He gives a great performance in every single movie he does, and at this point his consistent brilliance is causing us to become complacent and not truly pay attention to the fact that he is one of THE great actors of our generation. "Road to Perdition" is a film that is hampered by this fact. While the finished product is nothing to cough at, a lot of it feels remote, not grabbing our attention as much as it should. This is mostly because the two characters we should care about most-Michael Sullivan (Hanks) and his son (Tyler Hoechlin)-do not engage our emotions as they should. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE - ONTROERING** The character development of this father and son **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**, a crucial point in the film, is neither as deep or expansive as the other characters in the movie. **COMPLEXITEIT**

The film's plot involves hitman Michael Sullivan being propelled on a quest for revenge after his wife and youngest son are murdered by Connor Rooney (Daniel Craig), the loathsome, greedy, and ultimately pathetic son of Irish mob boss John Rooney (a brilliant Paul Newman). With Sullivan after his son's life, Rooney, who is in principle a fair and decent man despite his unlawful business practices, is forced to order a hit on the man he loves like a son. Actually, he loves him more than his own son, which is why this whole situation got started in the first place. The hitman they call to kill Sullivan is an odd-looking photographer of the dead named Maguire (Jude Law). The first time you see this guy, he notices that one of the dead he's shooting (camera, not gun) is not exactly dead-only wounded. Instead of alerting the authorities, however, Maguire finishes the wounded man off-smothering him with an ammonium-soaked handkerchief. From this point on it is clear that Maguire is completely psychotic. Jude Law is very impressive, playing the character as a subdued, quiet loner instead of a raving maniac-thus making the character all the more frightening and monstrous.

The film is filled with powerful moments. Most of these moments belong to Newman, who in his twilight years gives one of his finest performances as a man confronted with an impossible situation, quite aware that he will probably not come out of it alive **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT**. The scene where Rooney beats his son after the murder of Sullivan's family, then embraces him saying "God help us", is effective, but it's just the beginning. There is also the incredible scene where Rooney has to order the hit to Frank Nitti (Stanley Tucci). Newman truly embodies the terrible conflict that faces his character-he doesn't want to order death on his spiritual son, but he just can't let his actual son die either. "God help me" he whispers as he does the deed. "Nothing happens to the kid" is another order, even after Frank warns him that the kid will come for revenge-does Rooney want the son's vengeance? **INTERPRETATIE** There is a tense scene in a diner between Maguire and Sullivan, a fatalistic speech in a church basement by Rooney that highlights the entire situation, and a brilliantly shot (this film deserved its cinematography credit-wow Conrad Hall was truly great) slow-motion segment where Hanks guns down all of Rooney's men, then (with a look of infinite sadness and pain-Sullivan doesn't want to kill his spiritual father any more than Rooney wants to kill his spiritual son)Rooney himself **SUBTILITEIT**. Newman's final line, "I'm glad it was you", is heartbreaking **ONTROERING** and illuminating-he has been aware of the inevitability of his violent death for many years-but he is glad he dies by his "son's" hand. The one moment, however, that should be most powerful has barely any emotional weight at all. The moment where Tom Hanks is shot down from behind by a vengeful Maguire should be shocking and tragic, but it just feels tacked-on. Maybe the director, Sam Mendes **REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD**, is trying to show how, in Sullivan's world, everyone is just waiting for the bullet with their name on it. But in this case it seems like the film is just being sad for no other reason than to be sad. Hanks' remote character is also at fault (but that is to be blamed on the script, not Hanks, who is brilliant as always). Hoechlin's pretentious monologues at the beginning and end of the film don't help

either. Nevertheless, "Road to Perdition" is a very good movie. Great performances, a truly compelling plot, and excellent production values (let me again stress that the cinematography is INCREDIBLE FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – GEBRUIK HAT) make this film a keeper. Just a few small flaws keep it from being a follow up masterpiece to Mendes' previous film, the perfect "American Beauty". But those flaws do not diminish its amazing strengths.

5 User generated reviews: American Splendor

Review 1:

American brilliance, 9 September 2003 **GEBRUIK HAT**

Author: [jotix100](#) from New York

I must confess that I was a bit apprehensive in going to see this film. I thought it would be one of those movies that are hyped to the max by the adoring critics, but that it would turn out to be a darling of the reviewers and not the great film everyone was making it to be.

Well, I was thoroughly surprised by the brilliant film making shown by the directors Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**. They have created a film that works in different levels. First, it is the story of Harvey Pekar told in cinematic terms. Secondly, by presenting the real Harvey Pekar to speak to the camera as he is interviewed, it adds another dimension about the directors' vision in bringing him to us to tell us in his own words, **INTERPRETATIE** that yes, there is a real person whose life we are getting to know **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. And thirdly, it works as the weird comic strip that Harvey Pekar might have conceived in his mind.

Harvey Pekar is an example of a strange man who lives and functions within the American society, yet, for all practical purposes, he is in his own little world of collecting books and records and writing his wry observations on what he sees around him. Are we to say we are normal and Harry is not? What if it turns out that Harvey had it all figured out and we had no clue? Let the viewer decide for himself.

The directors great achievement is the brilliant casting **GEBRUIK HAT**. Paul Giamatti is the closest thing anyone would have selected to the real Harvey. Up to now, I have only seen Mr. Giamatti in comedies that didn't have the weight of this film. His take on Harvey is so intense that there are parts when we see the actor and immediately, the real Harvey comes on a different scene. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Separating them is almost impossible, as Giamatti's performance leads to Harvey and vice versa. He is totally believable here **SUBTILITEIT**. He proves that whatever he is doing on screen is what we would expect the real Harvey to do on his own life.

The other incredible casting is the one of Hope Davis as Joyce Brabner. Ms. Davis gets the essence of Joyce with very little effort. We can almost see that the Joyce of Hope Davis will result in the actual Joyce we see in the interviews as herself. The resemblance is uncanny. Ms. Davis is outstanding in the film. We wonder what could have attracted her to Harvey, in the first place. Of course, we realize her passion for comics, but on a physical level, these two, as a couple, are miles and miles apart. Yet, their marriage, unlike Harvey's other two before her, survives and grows.

Ms. Davis scenes with the young Danielle are pure poetry **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. We can see it in her face that motherhood for her is very important, yet, she cannot have a child of her own with Harvey. She is thoroughly rewarded at the end with the arrival of Danielle who finds in Joyce a kind soul and a mother because her real one could not be bothered with her.

The rest of the cast is just as magnificent. Judah Friedlander as Toby is both funny and pathetic **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. He is another product of the society he lives in. Also effective, James Urbaniak as the illustrator Bob Crumb who sees in Harvey's stories the potential for great comic books.

This is a triumph for all that were involved in this film. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Review 2:

A modern classic TIJDLOOSHEID of successful innovation ORIGINALITEIT, 25 August 2003

Author: Chris Docker (eyeforfilm) from Scotland, United Kingdom

Successfully innovative, American *Splendor* combines fiction and reality in a spellbinding and amusing way **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE - GEBRUIK HAT**, winning awards at Cannes and Sundance, and proving its maxim that life is pretty complex (and endlessly fascinating) stuff . .

The story features Harvey Pekar, as himself, as the played by actor Paul Giamatti and as the comic book persona that he has created based on himself. Pekar is downbeat, depressed, in a dead end filing job, rather bitter. His best friend is a self-confessed nerd. Yet when the events of his life are epitomized in comic book snapshots they are intensely poignant, *they seem to reach the disenfranchised, the dysfunctional within each of us.* **INTERPRETATIE** We follow him into a marriage that is as weird as he is. The originality of the material is reflected in its postmodern style of presentation **SUBTILITEIT**, self-awareness of audience-manipulation blending seamlessly with entertainment and artistic delivery **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. Scenes are introduced and blended with comic book taglines, storyboarding, and even transitions from interloping set discussions with the real Pekar to the actor playing the scene under discussion. If it sounds pretentious, it's not – simply because it works so well and in an unpretentious way. Lovingly created and very moving. *Probably the first real classic of 2003 and not to be missed, and for lovers of jazz/blues a soundtrack collectors item* **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**.

(Seeing it at the Edinburgh International Film Festival I also had the privilege of seeing the real life Pekar, his wife and adopted daughter together with Paul Giamatti, truly topping off a multi-media experience haha!)

Review 3:

Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant Paul Giamatti GEBRUIK HAT, 29 January 2005

Author: mmitos-1 from Oak Brook

I'm sorry, but I just saw this movie this week on cable, and went out and bought the DVD immediately thereafter. I have since watched it about 15 times, so far. I'm not a comic book fan (at all), and I've never heard of Harvey Pekar (*though perhaps vaguely remember his appearances on David Letterman, since seeing this film* **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**). Giamatti's performance alone is worth the time in watching this film **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. I don't think anything Brando, Pacino, or DeNiro has done, to name a few, compares to what Giamatti pulls off in this film. And with that said, perhaps I'm still too new and enthusiastic a viewer to be reviewing his performance. However, PG's every nuance, from his eyebrow twitches and raises, to the shrug of his shoulders, to his speech pattern, to the manner in which he says "OK, OK" early on to his doctor when he's getting his throat checked to his walk...**EVERYTHING** is just so wonderfully "channeled" **SUBTILITEIT**. He offers such a natural character, and whether or not he is Pekar spot on, I don't know. However, he created his own wonderful big little character. (The scene in which he is talking to Joyce (Hope Davis' character) on the phone, urging her to meet him in Cleveland, is quietly hysterical).

Hope Davis was also great, and it's amazing how much her natural voice and speech pattern resemble that of Pekar's wife. *Full of laughs and pathos* **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**, in addition to wonderful jazz scores (*I haven't checked if there's a soundtrack for the film...I hope that there is one*) **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**....this is a must-see film...absolutely brilliant! I don't even know if P. Giamatti was nominated for his performance, but he should have won every award that year, including the Oscar (or at least tie with Sean Penn). I know I have spent all this time commenting on just the two main characters, because they are both so breathtakingly brilliant in their interpretations. Therefore, I'll offer a note about the film overall as well.

First, the film is brilliantly executed **GEBRUIK HAT**. Combining both actors and original screenplay material along with some real-life footage of Harvey Pekar himself was very inventive. **ORIGINALITEIT** And, the use of this approach never bordered on being "cutesy" or clever, as Pekar's perspective and ongoing commentary truly validates the entire film. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** As I mentioned before, P. Giamatti seems to inhabit Pekar....and provides a very endearing portrait in the process. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** I have for so many years far preferred quieter, character-driven films, which happen to typically fall within the "indie" category. This film has simply solidified my love for character-driven stories. It is insightful, very droll, and full of pathos **COMPLEXITEIT**. I am now even contemplating subscribing to the comic book "American Splendor", and I am someone who **ABSOLUTELY ABHORS** all forms of animation **CONTEXT CBA**. I particularly despise animated films, and only read "Cathy", "Dilbert", and "Doonesbury" from the strips. However, I might just start subscribing to "American Splendor". Because I missed this film when it first came out, I am not certain how large an audience it originally attracted, quite frankly. However, watching it has made me shun, just a little bit more, larger, Hollywood productions, including typical, cookie-cutter romantic comedies (as for another mass-produced Hollywood genre....action/adventure films...I've always hated them and never watch them). I won't turn into a snob and completely shun all Hollywood films, but there certainly is something to be said for quiet, thoughtful pieces that are accompanied by a refreshingly wonderful jazz soundtrack (too many films today appear to have been written around x number of popular songs...it can be quite annoying). As for this film, it's a treasure. Please rent it and **ENJOY! ENTERTAINMENTERVARING**

Review 4:

Look at that: Harvey Pekar and Hope Davis!, 27 February 2005

Author: TheHumbleCritic from Los Angeles

"American Splendor" was one of those films mildly recognized when it came out by some critics, and lauded to the skies by some others. The LA Film Critics gave the film a screenplay award, but when I looked again, I realized there was a "Best Picture" award attached too. These same critics have praised the thing as a masterpiece of independent film-making. Unacceptable.

For one, I have not encountered a film on this site that is not designated as a "masterpiece" by some deluded reviewer. For another, the film might hide behind the mask of independent bravura, but the casting gives it away completely. When you have the pear-shaped and balding Giamatti cast as a fairly accurate Harvey Pekar, then the same should apply for his female counterpart. But the Hollywood creators of the film couldn't bite the bullet and cast a matching unattractive female lead. Are there any actresses out there besides Meryl Streep and Kirsten Dunst who are not nor were ever pretty? **The filmmakers attempt to make Hope Davis into a plain Jane by draping her in a Lily Munster wig and setting a pair of wide-rimmed spectacles on her nose. But her movie-star good looks easily scream through** **SUBTILITEIT**. Is Charleze Theron the only one in recent memory to pull off the sort of extreme physical transformation seemingly required of our Hollywood starlets these days? (as she lost it all promptly in time for the many awards ceremonies) Here's an idea: instead of making our pretty girls ugly, why not just save a lot of trouble and hire an ugly duckling who can ACT? **Hope Davis is a normally fine actress, but her forced gawkiness is miscast here. There is absolutely NO resemblance between Pekar's real-life wife at the end of the film with Davis, but there are plenty of similarities between Pekar and Giamatti, so I don't want to hear that movies don't have to mimic real life since the filmmakers wanted to have it both ways here.** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

The acting and writing are what is usually praised about this film, but frankly the script is disgustingly exploitive and gimmicky. **ORIGINALITEIT** Pekar's insistent pessimism is so narrow and repetitive that there is absolutely nothing else shown about this character. We get the

filmic version of the comic book character, **only the constant one-liners and sitcom humor of comic strips don't really make for a very compelling or even watchable feature-length film.** **HUMOR-GRAPPIGHEID** And the idea of a depressed loser isn't all that new, people. The filmmakers' and writers' doggedness in making sure Pekar does not change from his surly self one iota isn't formulaic, but the idea is horribly thin. Look at it this way: change Pekar's monochromatic crabbiness with a spunky guy who's always giddy and smiling, and you get the same, **irritatingly simplistic COMPLEXITEIT**, exaggerated, and petty version on another extreme that no critic would be calling "refreshing" or "different." The sad but thankfully upbeat reality of the matter is that Pekar bears no more resemblance to another side of the American everyman than does, say, Polyanna or Pippa resemble plausible moral uplift in ugly suburbia.

Bottom line, unless you're dealing with someone with bipolar disorder, extremes of people rarely make for realistic or compelling characters **SUBTILITEIT**. Forgive me for this rant, as I normally wouldn't have such a problem with the idea of a depressed file clerk finding a creative outlet, but the idea that Pekar should get commended for his phony and calculated self-loathing is insulting. The guy obviously cares enough about what he has to say that he's published anthologies of his works and now has made a movie ABOUT HIMSELF. Contrast his manipulative business acumen with, say, true manic-depressives like playwright Sarah Kane who recently took her life for (or maybe from) her art, and you'll see where I'm getting at. For Pekar, there's a lot of money to be made and attention to be gained being a scratchy-voiced spokesman for the emotionally oppressed. **There is zero authenticity to this guy, and maybe it fits that the character in the film is so shallow as well** **EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT**.

The few witticisms in the screenplay taken directly from Pekar's comic strip are no solve to the already unsalvageable mess. It's like giving a guy some Tylenol when a dog is chewing on his balls; we're not combating the source. **And while Giamatti is decent, his performance is marred by the mere post-"Sideways" fact that he is capable of so much more.** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** In "Splendor," Giamatti's excessive and exaggerated mannerisms, like scratching his head **OVER and OVER** (along with his jumping eyebrows), play to the exact same idea that Harvey Pekar is just a caricature, and not a character. **INTERPRETATIE** His acting corrective can be found in Payne's "Sideways;" it's pretty much a perfect performance. In fact, just go see "Sideways," a film about **REAL** people living lives of **REAL** desperation, **and skip this scheming dreck** **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**.

Review 5:

Maybe the most exciting movie of the year? **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**, 8 January 2004

Author: cybers1 from New York, NY

This is the type of movie that reminds me of why I love watching movies in the first place. **Extremely creative take on the life of Harvey Pekar** **ORIGINALITEIT**, whose life has been presented inventively ever since he started writing semi-autobiographical comic books that share the film's name and having his famous underground comic buddies such as R. Crumb illustrate them. He managed to create an entirely new storytelling method, using a lightly-considered media and telling stories of great weight and humanity, owing in equal parts to his pessimistic nature; a life as a 'real person' working as a filing clerk until his retirement; and, as Pekar himself puts it, that, **'Ordinary life is pretty complex stuff.** **COMPLEXITEIT'** The story is told dramatically with actors portraying Harvey and those close to him in life, including his wife, the depressive philanthropist Joyce Brabner, their adopted daughter Danielle, and friends like self-proclaimed Nerd Toby Radloff, who talks like The Simpsons' Database (and if you know who that is off the top of your head, chances are good you're a fair bit nerdy yerself!) Meanwhile, the movie is interspersed with interviews with the real people of this story, getting their take on the events that are taking place dramatically, **such as Harvey's appearances on The Late Show with David Letterman.** **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** The joy is not only in seeing how closely the performances mirror the real people, but how interesting

the people are in these interviews - people who have lived relatively normal lives but for the fact that they've all been portrayed in a cult comic book series. There are other moments that are remarkable, such as having drama-Harvey walking through his life in comic-book drawings and the remarkable (and true) turn of events that brings Danielle into their lives during Harvey's battle with testicular cancer **ONTROERING** (recounted in *Our Cancer Year*, by Pekar and Brabner). A simple drama of a simple life, nothing more, but an incredible film told in a remarkable way that is exciting to the core.

5 User generated reviews: Bulletproof Monk

Review 1:

Very good but light fantasy/action entertainment, ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE 18 February 2005

Author: Brandt Sponseller from New York City

Chow Yun-Fat is the "Monk with No Name" who protects an ancient scroll. Anyone who recites the scroll can harness unlimited power, utilizing it for either good or evil. The scroll-keeper has the advantage of not aging and not being able to be physically harmed. The Monk has been on the run from would be rulers of the universe for 60 years when he finally runs into a potential new scroll-keeper as promised by prophecies.

Bulletproof Monk is a "light" comic book/fantasy/action/martial **SERIEUS** arts/comedy film **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** in the vein of The Golden Child (1986) and The Medallion (2003). It leans most strongly towards the fantasy genre, but it's **frequently funny (perhaps more subtly than one would expect)** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** and loaded with visually poetic, wire-heavy martial arts.

Seann William Scott is Kar, a street kid who has a flair for kung fu, which he picked up by endlessly watching and emulating Asian films at the theater where he both lives and works as the projectionist. He has even more of a flair for pickpocketing. The Monk runs into him while both are on the run, and there are a number of cleverly staged scenes where Kar tries to palm a few extra bucks while the Monk attempts to teach him both ethics and enlightenment via koans about things like hot dogs and buns.

During these early scenes, they run into a hilarious group of what are effectively CHUDs (Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers) minus the C, headed by a rooster-haired thug named "Funktastic". **This is some of the more slyly funny material in the film--** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** the HUDs even have an abandoned subway car turned disco in their underground lair.

The kung fu throughout most of Bulletproof Monk is of the variety often mythologized by kids as being akin to "magic". **SUBTILITEIT-GEBRUIK HAT** The Monk can defy gravity, move fast enough that he seems to predict his opponent's moves with near omniscience, and dodge bullets. He can even fight and eat a bowl of Cocoa Puffs at the same time. **The real aim is to approach a Matrix (1999)-like reality-bending in the film's universe** **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Although the fantasy, almost dance-like nature of many of the fight scenes may turn off those looking for more realistic action, Troy Liddell also choreographs some parts of fight scenes more traditionally, with Yun-Fat performing something very similar to aikido--he primarily yields instead of blocking or countering, and uses his opponent's moves against themselves. It's an interesting approach that isn't used often enough in martial arts films.

The principle flaw with Bulletproof Monk is that too many plot elements and characters seem to flow by too quickly **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. There isn't a lot of time to delve very far into many threads. **This gives the film a more superficial feel that should have been solved by lengthening and tightening the focus to give elements at least a typical James Bond film significance and weight** **COMPLEXITEIT**. Aspects of the film may also be a bit too clichéd for some viewers tastes. **ORIGINALITEIT**

But you probably wouldn't watch Bulletproof Monk expecting a masterpiece. As a wispy fantasy/action film, geared as much towards adolescents as any other age group, Bulletproof Monk is a rewarding way to spend an hour and a half. I'm a fan of Yun-Fat's work, including this film, and I enjoyed both Scott and Jaime King's performances quite a bit. In fact, **I liked the film enough to hope for a sequel** **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**.

Review 2:

Bulletproof Monk has Gaping Holes and Leaves Me Longing for More (Holes). 13 December 2007

Author: [Mark von Schlemmer](#) from Lawrence, Kansas, USA

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

At the title alone, you might think accomplished veteran actor Yun-Fat Chow should be above such movies as Bulletproof Monk. You'd be right. Oh so right. He oozes cool charm and monklly attitude, but when the bullets start flying, we almost wish he wasn't so bulletproof and he'd end up with as many bullet holes in him **as the holes in the plot of this low-grade B-movie if for no other reason than to wipe that interminable smug look off his face.**

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

But that's not fair to him. Smugness aside, he's practically the only thing worth watching in this movie **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Even Jaime King's Jade is made out to be so Barbie-cute that I found myself hoping a few stray bullets would catch her as well. **And once you realize that all you'll get out of this movie are fancy action scenes, FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** you get disappointed again because every action scene in this movie is cut with such quick shots that we never get to see any particularly impressive martial arts moves. I could probably walk up a wall, flip over backwards, and kick someone in the back of the head without any special effects if every shot you shoot of me is half a second long!

For all the ability that the Chow's "Monk with no name" and Seann William Scott's "Kar" have (there's a reason he has such a silly name but I found my attention lagging fairly early on when he carefully explained it), it's amazing how the little things really throw them off. Chow is a magically enabled Tibetan whose sole mission is to keep a sacred and powerful scroll out of the hands of—oh wait! Did I mention the Nazis? The bad guys in this movie are Nazis! Kar is a pickpocket/film projectionist who has learned all his amazing fighting skills from the Chinese films he projects—actually one of the more believable claims in the movie. He catches the Monk's attention when he helps to—did I mention there's a child caught on subway rail tracks? Her foot is caught between the rails! Together, they free the child. In the congratulatory hug, Kar lifts the scroll from the Monk's bag and gets to feature his own smug look. **Okay, perhaps this was all part of the Monk's clever plan because he sees potential in this young thief to be his replacement COMPLEXITEIT**. But by this point, this movie hasn't earned my trust enough to give it the credit that perhaps this was all planned by the Monk. At this point I'm thinking, "He's kept this scroll safe for 60 years and this punk just swiped it? I wonder if I get free refills on my medium popcorn?"

This is probably a good time to point out that a good mix in the soda fountain and some tasty popcorn can make nearly any movie slightly more bearable **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. Here's a tip: Bring your own popcorn toppings with you to the theatre. I go for nutritional yeast and this spice mix called Spike. Good stuff. I don't think it's even breaking any rules since they don't offer any of these toppings for sale at the concessions counter. I learned this mix from the local art house theatre. Bulletproof Monk did NOT play at the art house theatre. Yun-Fat Chow's smash hit Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon DID play at the art house theatre. The lesson learned here: Chow needs keep his American releases in the art houses.

So anyway, this Barbie-cute Jade character is hanging with a gang of over-actors in a subway grotto. But wait, someone working on the film had access to a big fancy mansion. I know! Let's have Jade actually be a spoiled rich Russian mobster's daughter who just hangs out with gangs because they are violent and have bad accents! That neatly (?) paves the way for a shoot out in the big fancy mansion and also gives the characters some money to buy explosives and a tank car when they need to go rescue the magically enabled Monk after he inexplicably gets captured by the Nazis.

In conclusion, I must give this movie some credit for at least one thing. No other person's

image on the big screen has ever screamed out to be a Nazi bimbo more than Victoria Smurfit (you might think I made that name up, but I didn't). Thank goodness we have Nazis in this movie just begging for a blonde, blue-eyed Amazon to beat up on the good guys. At first it seems she is just the curator of a museum exhibit on human rights, but luckily we discover that's just a cover for the Nazis. It's that very sort of twist that makes you realize just how important good popcorn is to the enjoyment of a movie like this. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 3:

It has some good points, but it's weak. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR, 19 April 2003

Author: Anthony Boyd from CA, USA

Oh. My. God. The dialogue was absolutely terrible. I kept watching their lips to see if it was dubbed from another language, but no such luck. The actors are really speaking English, and most of it is derivative or cliché. ORIGINALITEIT Also, some of the scenes in the movie require you to suspend disbelief, suspend rational thought, and suspend your intelligence. COMPLEXITEIT The idea that they could have shootouts and not a cop in the city notices, the idea that they could leave the cinema owner's corpse in the main character's apartment without raising suspicions, the fact that they walk freely throughout the city without people screaming or police arresting them, it's bizarre. SUBTILITEIT And don't get me started on MR. FANTASTIC or whatever his name was. It reminded me of the day-glo New York City in "Rumble in the Bronx" --VERGELIJKING FILMS we know it's NOTHING like reality, so we just laugh at the sets and the characters HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID, and hope for some good fight scenes.

Well, this movie has some good fight scenes FOCUS SPEKTAKEL and some good laughs HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID, but it also has multiple boring interludes where the poor thing just plods along. SPANNING/SUSPENS If you're going to go, understand that this movie is a guilty pleasure -- you'll squirm at the terrible dialogue, roll your eyes at how unreal and poorly thought-out everything is, laugh a few times, and wish the fight scenes were longer ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. By the way, the fighting is just an imitation of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon -- without the skill or passion that movie had. VERGELIJKING FILMS I think the thing I liked most about this film was the pickpocketing, it was funny just to see the main character lift a dozen purses and wallets just walking up the subway stairs. But who goes to a movie for the good pickpocketing scenes?

Review 4:

Crouching Tiger Lite... Silly, but fun none the less, 18 April 2003

Author: sixpack-3 from New Jersey

I have been a huge fan of Chow Yun-Fat's Hong Kong flicks for years. He is one of the most charismatic actors in the world and always brings depth to the characters he plays. But, he hasn't quite been used in any really good movies in any of his American made films. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT Despite the fact that he has carried those films on his shoulder, they have all seemed to lack something really special other than his performance. Bulletproof Monk is no exception. He is clearly the best part of the film and I was happy to see him kicking backside.FOCUS SPEKTAKEL What is great to see is that it seems that he has finally become comfortable with the English language. He is extremely loose and comfortable in this movie and that allows his incredible charm to ooze out of the screen, something that was lacking in his previous English language films. Fans of Chow Yun-Fat will enjoy his performance and those who are unfamiliar with him will finally get a sense for why so many folks around the world love his work. I hope there is more to come.

However, people who are not familiar with Honk Kong cinema may not enjoy the movie. VOORSPELLING REACTIE It is a weird mix of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and The Matrix, with a little bit of Raiders of the Lost Ark and The Karate Kid VERGELIJKING FILMS thrown in and

is full of dialogue regarding enlightenment, jumbled together with a ridiculous plot. Despite that, the film is actually fun and entertaining. Yun-Fat finds himself cast in a role that has become all too familiar in movies about Eastern philosophy, that whole Mister Miagi Asian mentor role. However, he brings his unique charm to the film and brings us a master who understands his young student, versus the usual tiny Asian man who can barely speak English who has trouble identifying with his pupil. That brings a fresh aspect to a film that will probably otherwise look an awful lot like a bunch of other movies stitched together. **To me, the most unfortunate thing about the movie is the fact that they seemed to cut the action scenes down.** ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE You start to get a taste of what Chow Yun-Fat is famous for, but then the scene is ended. I felt teased by most of the film and would have liked to have seen them add in fifteen more minutes of fighting so that I could get my fix. The studio obviously opted for the whole 90 minute length thing, so you do feel like you could have gotten more.

My biggest concern going into the film was Sean William Scott. I was not sure how the pairing would work, but Sean is very low-key in this movie and the two have a very good chemistry. It's a shame that the script wasn't better, because I think that they had real potential to make a great film.

Overall, I enjoyed the movie ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. Don't look for a cohesive plot. COMPLEXITEIT I would suggest going to see this film after a hard day of work as a means of escape. Enjoy seeing Chow Yun Fat on the screen again and don't expect more than a Cliffs Notes version of Crouching Tiger.

Review 5:
Too bad the script wasn't made of Monk., 17 April 2003

Author: [brianjgeraghty](#) from Cincinnati, Oh

Sadly, I must cast a less than favorable review of this movie. While I have been long anticipating its release, I believe it failed to live up to its potential ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. This could be due to lackluster, undeveloped characters (Scott, and King) ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS the comic book based plot transcribed to script by the oft paired Reiff & Voris CONTEXT CBA, or the theatrical inexperience of director Paul Hunter. REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD Mr. Hunter does have experience in shooting videos and commercials which I believe in this case impeded his ability to shoot a proper action sequence due to occluded shots and altering shot directions. A bright point in this film is the Yun-Fat performance of the master/protector POSITIEF-NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR. This sort of role is really old hat for him these days though. Additionally there are some non sequiturs, and some flat jokes HUMOR-GRAPPIGHEID. However, I am willing to let bygones be bygones and say that from a sheer entertainment standpoint, not looking too closely at the chiaroscuro GEBRUIK HAT, Scott utilizes his ability to deliver a joke from "pie" to a success here, most of the time. And the story itself is an interesting, if not novel concept ORIGINALITEIT.

5 User generated reviews: A History of Violence

Review: 1

In the Blood, 2 October 2005

Author: [jon.h.ochiai \(jochiai@social.rr.com\)](mailto:jon.h.ochiai@social.rr.com) from Los Angeles, CA

In the middle of the night young Sarah (Heidi Hayes) wakes from a nightmare. Her father, Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen) comforts her saying, "There are no such thing as monsters..." Director David Cronenberg's **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** "A History of Violence" questions whether human monsters are truly born or trained to be so. Based on a graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke **CONTEXT CBA**, Josh Olson's screenplay offers a provocative answer. Though for Cronenberg and Olson, the power of "A History of Violence" lies in its character study. Viggo Mortensen as Tom Stall is commanding and powerful as the center of this character piece. This is one the year's best movies. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Cronenberg creates the idyllic setting of a small Indiana town. Tom Stall (Mortensen) is a mild mannered and community respected family man. He has a loving and beautiful wife Edie (strong and smart Maria Bello). His daughter Sarah likes shopping for shoes. His teenage son Jack (Ashton Holmes) is sucking as a baseball player and a target of bully Bobby (Kyle Schmid). Tom owns Stall's Dinner in town. Then one day ruthless killers (evil Stephen McHattie and Greg Bryk) draw their guns in a robbery attempt at Tom's diner. Tom kills both like they are not even there. He dispatches them with awesome deadly force and brutality. His actions are warranted, and seemingly instinctive. Tom becomes a town and national hero. His photo even appears on CNN.

Soon after returning to work a mysterious man and his henchmen visit Tom in his diner. The man, Carl Fogerty (menacing Ed Harris), reveals a disfiguring injury and claims to know Tom, as Joey Cusack. Tom really does not seem to know Carl, and kindly asks him to leave. Things don't seem to add up regarding Tom. Carl later asks Tom's wife Edie "Why is he (Tom) so good at killing people." **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS** Cronenberg brilliantly lulls us in a sense of normalcy, then launches in a predetermined direction and tone **GEBRUIK HAT**. He hints at his answer with son Jack's explosive actions. Also his "A History of Violence" is a study of extremes, likely intentional. **INTERPRETATIE** The violence is graphic controlled brutality, and merciless. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** The sex scene with Tom and Edie on the stairs is raw and erotic. Cronenberg also manages an unexpected resolution.

Viggo Mortensen is electrifying. He uses his classic good looks and understated charm to play the gentle family man Tom Stall. Mortensen also displays a powerful and explosive presence as Tom's darker persona **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Mortensen is athletic and expertly performs the amazing martial arts and fight scenes. Maria Bello is awesome as Edie. Even with her glamor subdued she is stunning and sexy **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Her Edie is strong willed enduring her own doubts regarding who her husband really is. Her reaction at the story's arc is both believable **SUBTILITEIT** and heartbreaking **ONTROERING**. She and Mortensen have amazing chemistry. Ed Harris is calculated evil as Carl Fogerty. Newcomer Ashton Holmes is impressive as young Jack. His portrayal leads us to believe it maybe truly in the blood. William Hurt's turn in a pivotal role is unexpectedly shocking and completely effective.

Cronenberg has fashioned a fable about character and fate in "A History of Violence". This is one of the best movies of the year. Viggo Mortensen is simply powerful. "A History of Violence" is worth seeing and worthy of thought **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE - COMPLEXITEIT**.

Review 2:

Well enough done but not really interesting ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE..., 1 October 2005

Author: [Polaris_DiB](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

How one views a movie often deals with one's approach to the film. I made a mistake with this movie. I went in, having had difficulty securing a Cronenberg REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD movie before, waiting to get an introduction to his style. I went in expecting, based on what I've heard about Cronenberg, a stylized film. I came in expecting a theme.

I was mostly disappointed on all three marks. What I ended up with was a fairly straight-forward identity thriller, and that surprised me.

Viggo Mortensen plays Tom Stall, a docile man in a docile world. Viggo Mortensen's style of acting, judging by Lord of the Rings, Hidalgo, and this film, is to whisper when he's getting dramatic. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT This works well with the film in that everyone in it is either just as docile as Tom, or trying to be smooth and stoic, which involves an outward appearance of docility SUBTILITEIT. Tom Stall owns a café, has a good family, has no worries but that he can't get his truck started. Then some violent criminals decide to mess with his coworkers during closing, and he shows a side of himself nobody (in the film) expected: the ability to kill with relative ease. So thus the audience is in the search for his identity, who he is, and where he came from.

This film started many things and decided to give them up. At first it seems a film to look into the undercurrent of violence in even the most domestic of communities. INTERPRETATIE Then it seems to be a film of mistaken identity and bad fate. Then it just decides to be another story of a man escaping a past he didn't like, and finding out that he can't... as in, what we've seen many many times before.

But it's a Cronenberg film. This means that it's stylized, interesting, and special, right? Honestly, I saw nothing in this film that struck me particularly as "something only Cronenberg could do." Sure, there's some pretty detailed gore effects, but they're sporadic, random, and worst of all, not needed for anything. Sure, there's some strange sexual encounters, but they don't really seem as anything except for sex, they don't develop the characters ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS, they don't add anything to the story, they just exist in a sort of acceptable state of "Well, might as well find a way to show these characters having sex." They do reveal that Viggo Mortensen doesn't have that great of a body, if anybody cares about that.

Speaking of the writing, indeed, it doesn't seem real care or interest was put into the script. Nothing particularly new is given us, the dialog could have been cut and pasted in any other movie of this genre, and the character development was, again, straight-forward and unappealing. ORIGINALITEIT

As I mentioned before, I thought a large part of the lethargy in this film had something to do with the theme of violence as an undercurrent, but my mistake was thinking there was a theme. Even during moments when the action starts to pick up, it feels like the actors are really just sleep-walking through their roles. Only Ed Harris seemed to have any fun at all, everything else about this movie seems as though Cronenberg forced the cast and crew to stay awake for 24 hours before filming began to make everything seem lazy. Even the cinematography seems lazy after the wonderful long take at the beginning. SUBTILITEIT However, stuff like the close-ups never really added to drama but more made me frustratingly want to take the director's chair and say, "All right, move back a couple of feet, give us some room!" It's not a bad film. It's just that the ending credits came up after an exhaustingly long ending sequence of no importance and I couldn't help asking, "Oh? So what?" GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE This film is a good film to have some fun over the weekend with, but it's not really anything that can stick with you.

--PolarisDiB

Review 3:

The Good & Bad Of 'A History Of Violence', POSITIEF-NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR 7 January 2007

Author: [ccthemovieman-1](#) from Lockport, NY, United States

This was a very intriguing movie **GEBRUIK HAT**, for the most part. It had some things that really turned me off, but also things that made it extremely interesting at times.

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

There is excellent suspense in this movie which builds beautifully **SPANNING-SUSPENS**. It begins with a nice, soft-spoken modest guy named "Tom Stall" (Viggo Mortensen), a guy who runs a café in a small Indiana town. He suddenly becomes a hero when a pair of serial killers enter his establishment, threaten to rape the waitress and possibly kill the rest of the people inside and Tom disposes of them with quick action. He gets national attention for his heroics, but that just brings in a couple of mysterious people into town. One of them, "Carl Fogarty," (Ed Harris) calls "Tom" by another name: "Joey."

That's our first glimpse that "Tom" may not be "Tom," but some guy named "Joey" from Philadelphia who used to have mob connections. That turns out to be true. In fact, "Joey" was a brutal killer in his past days. I won't divulge any more of the story for those who haven't seen it. It's simply a good story about how our past can come back to haunt us, especially if their is anything illegal or immoral in it **COMPLEXITEIT**.

I liked the fact that the action, although violent at times, was not overdone. Most of the movie is pretty low-key.

What I didn't care for, or thought stretched credibility, was our hero's wife, who was way too big-city-hard looking and profane to be some small-town country girl who would marry such a nice guy as "Tom." **EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT** Maria Bello ("Edie") did not fit what this character should have looked and sounded like. Also, Tom's son "Jack" morphed from a nice old-fashioned, meek, picked-on school kid to a sullen, wise-guy, profane macho man in no time. That was unrealistic **SUBTILITEIT**, unless they were trying to infer the kid was exactly like his old man. Speaking of profanity, 14 uses of the Lord's name in vain in less than 80 minutes was offensive, at least to me.

William Hurt gets third billing in the film but only shows up with 14 minutes left! Granted, his role is a memorable one, however. Harris also had few lines for someone who gets good billing. Another guy I thought was pretty cool was the sheriff, played by Peter MacNeill. He had bigger roles than Harris or Hurt but got no billing.

Overall, offensive material notwithstanding, this was a unique film and one I would watch again.

Review 4:

A History of Cinema, 9 October 2005

Author: [Fred \(thurberdrawing@yahoo.com\)](mailto:thurberdrawing@yahoo.com) from Long Island, USA

THIS CONTAINS SPOILERS. I'm writing this comment not only because I thought this was a very good movie but also because its detractors seem to have misunderstood it.

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE To misunderstand a movie or a book or a song is different from finding it good or bad. I've seen movies I have not understood and have withheld judgment until I've gained perspective on them. Many of the reviewers here clearly have bumped into a work too difficult for them to grasp and their reaction has been to express astonishment that anybody has found satisfaction in it. So, let me say this: **The opening scene showing two extremely violent men committing their crime is, in itself, absolutely realistic** **SUBTILITEIT**. It's stark. It's neither exaggerated nor underplayed. The rest of the movie is deliberately off-center,

because what the viewer is supposed to be thinking throughout the whole thing is "Will this movie return to the soulless violence of the first scene?" **INTERPRETATIE** The crime at the start of the movie is unmatched. Gruesome things happen later, some of them rather comic, some silly **HUMOR-GRAPPIGHEID**, and some shocking, the most shocking ones being a slap, a moment where someone vomits as a result of emotion. Masks are torn off. But everything in this movie stems from the first scene, even though the plot itself doesn't relate to it. The main characters don't seem to know that the crime in the first scene has happened, but the mood its sets informs everything they do, if only because the person watching the movie always has this scene in the back of his mind. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** The first scene traumatizes the viewer. It softens him up, if you will. THIS is the world we live in, Cronenberg is saying. It's as if **TAXI DRIVER** had started with the climax. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** If this is a funny idea, then I suggest Cronenberg expected people to laugh at inappropriate moments, which is what has happened at many theatres, as a glance at three or four reviews here will show. People were laughing at the showing I saw, but I think they LIKED laughing at these inappropriate moments. This movie invites that type of laughter. We're supposed to find it funny. **HUMOR-GRAPPIGHEID** But there's one scene nobody laughs at. That's the first one. That's the one that's supposed to stick in your head and make you say "This world shouldn't be this way." I'm going to list a few things that show Cronenberg **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** did a lot of things on purpose in A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE: When the cop comes to the house to question Tom/Joey about whether or not he's in the witness protection program we see children's building blocks on a shelf on the wall. They're two blocks with the letters "E" and "T." Tom (or Tom/Joey, if you will) is an alien in his own land and runs the risk of being driven from his home. I won't argue about this obvious reference to E.T. But it is only one of several flags Cronenberg has set up as a way of saying "There's precedence for what I'm doing, here." It doesn't matter if you're rooting for Tom or not. You can't deny he's the classic fish-out-of-water whose at the center of many, many movies: **THE WIZARD OF OZ, THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, THE WRONG MAN, RAINMAN, FORREST GUMP**, and, of course, **E.T.** are all variations on the theme of the stranger at risk **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Apple pie and coffee play a conspicuous part in this movie--a reference to the obsession with apple-pie and coffee in **TWIN PEAKS**. **PULP FICTION** informs the proceedings, with the prevalence of diners and wise guys. The family threatened? There's precedent: **THE DESPERATE HOURS, CAPE FEAR, STRAW DOGS, THE BIRDS**. The family threatening? **THE GODFATHER**. If it's played over-the-top (the scene with the brother) or below the radar (the son) it's because Tom's dual nature is being highlighted by his ridiculously bad brother and his milk-and-cookies son. Tom/Joey is his own **SHANE**, disrupting and protecting his own family. If you want something MORE grisly than this, but which influenced it, take a look at **THE UNFORGIVEN** (an update of **SHANE**.) References to other movies don't make a great movie, but they do indicate that things can be put in place for a reason. I don't think a frame of A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE is wasted. It's entertaining **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**, thoughtful **COMPLEXITEIT** and chilling. **SPANNING-SUSPENS**

Review 5:
A Haunting Film, 24 October 2005

Author: [brocksilvey](#) from United States

Viggo Mortensen has been allowed to shed the silly, macho, grizzled locks and attitude he was forced to don for three long years in a row for the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, and has finally been given the chance to play a real character, that of Tom Stall, steady-eddie dad and husband, who may or may not be hiding a shocking and violent past.

Mortensen is terrific in this movie. It's one of those performances whose quality could be easily underestimated, because it's not a flashy role **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. No doubt at the end of the year, he will be overlooked for a bunch of actors who chew the scenery in phony Hollywood biopics, but such is the way of popular entertainment. **NEGATIEVE KIJK OP POP CULTUUR** Mortensen deserves accolades for this movie, and I hope other directors are paying attention to him.

David Cronenberg's "A History of Violence" **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** is a disturbing reflection on the pervasiveness of violence in our culture, the tendency to turn to violence first as a means of settling conflict, and the vicious cycle a reliance on violence can cause. **INTERPRETATIE / CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** In other words, violence breeds violence. I don't know that Cronenberg necessarily has anything new to say on the subject, but he has fashioned a haunting and memorable movie from the theme.

Maria Bello was considered by many to be woefully overlooked for her performance in "The Cooler" from two years ago; my hunch is the community will make that oversight up to her this year for her performance as Tom Stall's wife. It's refreshing to see a wife/mother character who is required to do more than suffer nobly. **Bello creates a vivid, strong, three-dimensional picture of a wife who has her entire world pulled out from under her and the steps she takes to deal with it. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

It's also nice for a change to see a movie where the violence matters, and has consequences. **When violence occurs in this movie, it is quick and startling--there are moments when I wanted to look away from the screen. GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPAITE** It just barely avoids being gratuitous, though, because it's not treated lightly. Part of the importance of the film's message is seeing what a bullet will do to a human face. Cronenberg approaches the material in a typically strange fashion (though this is one of the more accessible Cronenberg films). **It varies widely in tone: the tense, brooding atmosphere created whenever criminals are part of the scene; the almost funny picture painted by Cronenberg of an idyllic American small town, complete with bouncy music and a quaint main street; the action movie quality that takes over whenever Mortensen's character springs into action GEBRUIK HAT.** I'm not sure Cronenberg is entirely successful at blending these disparate elements, but I can appreciate what he was trying to do, and I felt that he was always in total control of his movie and made the finished product he wanted to make.

So far, the Oscar-bait season of 2005 has been an unusually ripe one for tough and relevant films. **Maybe the industry is finally reacting to 9/11 and the depressing, dispiriting hole American has fallen into since then at the hands of the Bush Administration. The last period of social and political unrest in America resulted in some of the best films ever made. Could we be on the verge of another period of greatness? Here's hoping. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

5 User generated reviews: V for Vendetta

Review 1:

a vividly vivacious and voluptuous volley of a very violently fun time ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE,
14 March 2006

Author: [samseescinema](#) from United States

*** This review may contain spoilers ***

V for Vendetta

rating: 3.5 out of 4

V for Vendetta is a swift and smugly entertaining portrait of revolution. Albeit, this is a Wachowski Brothers revolution REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD, meaning there must be wildly theatric heroes and crisply tailored CGI stunts all set comfortably in an oppressive Totalitarian society FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. But this is more than The Matrix with a Victorian flare. V for Vendetta offers up a convincing vision of the near-future paired with an operatic comic book tale of love, mystery, and a Guy-Fawkes-masked rebellion. INTERPRETATIE

Our hero is V (Hugo Weaving), a masked terrorist with a mind for the subversive, a taste for the eloquent, and a hand for knife-wielding acrobatics. His accidental apprentice (or maybe hostage) is Evey (Natalie Portman), a young woman V saved from the fondling grasps of corrupt Fingermen (kind of the CIA for the V for Vendetta world) as she hurried across town past curfew. Our oppressor in this world is High Chancellor Stutler (John Hurt), whose persona is shown primarily through a five-story tall projection of his ever-angry head. The exposition for this near-future lies mostly in the implosion of America after the middle-eastern war expanded into a world war that reached its tendrils even through Western Europe. America folded into civil strife while Britain became the final bastion of modern civilization after a biological attack isolated the island into a zone of quarantine. Stutler rose to power in the chaos and now rules Britain with the mantra "England Prevails!" Rest assured, however, this is not a reality governed by rolling robots and giant overhead blimps; it's a world that's, instead, very similar to ours. The technological innovations are hidden subtly into the film's environment, refusing to take precedent over the historically opulent flavors of England's architecture. SUBTILITEIT V for Vendetta has a flare for the theatric and operatic, after all. There's no room for bleeping robots and bounding technology. CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST

On the eve of November 5th, when Britain traditionally celebrated freedom and truth, V launches a subversive plot to topple High Chancellor Stutler and his surrounding administration. Hijacking the British Television Network, he broadcasts a speech that sets the date one year from November 5th as the date of the revolution. Our story takes place in the interim year leading up to the supposed revolution, with the evolution of Evey's politics, the ongoing vendetta V has set against the players of a mysterious government plot, and the deepening hole V digs for Stutler and his boys to stumble into once that fateful date arrives. "Remember, remember the fifth of November."

What separates V's rebellion from the teeming hordes of other cinematic coupe d'etats made over the years is that V for Vendetta approaches the topic with one eye held straight at the politics of the present ORIGINALITEIT. Hot button headline topics continually rear their heads here. Bush is paralleled to Stutler, the news media is heavily clouded, our hero is paired with images of suicide bombers and subway attacks; not to mention the undeniable fact that we are asked to sympathize with an outright terrorist. Is terrorism justified when paired against a strict oppressor? In the political climate of today--where the title of terrorism is threatening to mirror the clout McCarthy granted the title of Communism--V for Vendetta's answer to that question is a sure-handed yes.

But V for Vendetta is no heavy-handed political allegory INTERPRETATIE. At its heart, V for

Vendetta is entertainment. And as any entertainment with a hand in Victorian elegance, V for Vendetta must have romance. ENTERTAINMENTERVARING But before you conjure images of the Fawkes mask flying in a sweaty bald-headed scene of lust, realize first that there also is a master-grasshopper dynamic between Evey and V. The romance is formed as an understatement and rarely addressed, let to simmer below the surface and lend more chemistry to scenes that would otherwise ring hollow.

Natalie Portman may have stolen the tabloid exposure with her shiny shaved head, but Hugo Weaving is the masked performance that steals the show FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Much of the role's success lies in the writing, for V is made not to be simply a mask. There's a theme throughout the film asking whether behind masks of revolution, there lie fighting men and women, or only their ideals COMPLEXITEIT. V answers this question with charisma. Contradicting the common mantra that masked figures must be laconic, V, in fact, probably has the most lines of all. The character is full and rich with quirks and personality, but still exists with that essential air of mystery. Weaving achieves the same level of iconic performance that he did with Agent Smith in The Matrix. It really is that good. VERGELIJKING FILMS

There's been debate over the quality of adaptation the Wachowski Brothers offered to Alan Moore's original graphic novel. CONTEXT CBA Moore has publicly separated himself from the film, quoting in the New York Times last week that "the screenplay's rubbish." CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR Well, before we all walk away from the ticket line, remember firstly that Alan Moore will be the first to tell you himself that he is a selfish, pretentious prick. He knows it, and we know it. Let's move on. The screenplay's fine. In fact, it's a near-masterpiece CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST - GEBRUIK HAT. What the Wachowski Brothers have done is find the right balance between the theatrics of the graphic novel, and the solemnity to the richly Victorian narrative. They form a dynamic that plays to both sides, allowing for a story that sparks both political debate and giddy entertainment. We'll first shake our heads at the sentimental, soft-focus flashbacks and silly sub-plot for "nuclear human experimentation"; but when mulled over, we realize it's just the comic book mentality showing its spots. After all, V wouldn't start all his sentences with v-words had this film shunned its comic roots. And anyway, V for Vendetta is a vividly vivacious and voluptuous volley of a very violently fun time. ENTERTAINMENT

Review 2:

This is one of the best films I have ever seen..., 25 March 2006

Author: [lordblackburn13](#) from United States

...I am well aware that my summary line invites several retorts, and given the nature of my comment those retorts may very well be resoundingly, unanimously negative. If I say "This is one of the Best films I have ever seen..." One would think the immediate response would be, "Then you must not have seen many films in your time, dear boy." Butoh I have, and it has been far too long since there has been something up on that screen in the darkened theater that I enter to leave this boring, monotonous existence that had the capacity to inspire. To see the possibilities of what might be, what could never be, and what could happen if the leaders of the world keep things going in the directions that they are headed. V For Vendetta is just a film, yes? But it is also a wake up call of which there are not enough in this time we live in. It speaks directly to the hardship that we endure but seldom take notice of because we are distracted by things that do not matter. INTERPRETATIE..upon leaving the theater I saw people, teenagers mostly, the very people who should be pro-actively questioning the methodical erosion of this thing called government in the modern age, react with complete apathy. Most try so hard to be so outwardly different from the rest that they do not realize that in doing this they become just like everyone else; oblivious. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK We as a society do not want to see films like this, VOORSPELLING REACTIE we do not want to acknowledge the atrocities going on in the world, all we want to do is play our video games,

watch reality television, spend our money on clothes, jewelry, entertainment. Things that for all intents and purposes we do not need. These are the distractions that keep society from pondering in the wee hours of the night what they can do to prevent true injustice. The evils committed by those that govern are far worse than any fiction the cinema can dazzle us with these days. **Yes this is a truly great film and ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** one that I will cherish for a long time. I can only hope that its message finds a wide audience that is open to seeing things from another perspective, in a uniquely human light. **In the end that is what the film is about...being human INTERPRETATIE.** Having the capacity to choose whether or not to recognize the evils of society and take a stand to make things better than they are. The film of course takes this idea to extremes but for the viewing public dramatic examples are needed to awake them from this artificially induced state of being we call existence and say, "I see there is wrong, and it is my duty as a human being to do what I can to make it right." **To the makers of this unique GEBRUIK HAT** and wonderful film, I salute you.

Review 3:

V for Theatrical Victory, 27 June 2006

Author: tedreddi from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

V for Theatrical Victory My thumbs have been taken some heavy damage over the years. One year, my right thumb was broke due to a wrestling accident. Then, last year, I needed my left thumb surgically repaired... due to a wrestling accident. But, fortunately, both are back to working order. And both are pointing at the sky for V for Vendetta.

During the Vendetta, we follow the story of Evey, **who is played very well by Natalie Portman FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT.** Evey starts out as a damsel in distress who works for the only TV network in London, but ends a faithful apprentice to the draw of the movie, V. **V is an anarchist with the intent of making this futuristic London fall and having the people rebuild it when the gov't ceases to exist. And how does V plan to do this, you ask? Why, blowing up Parliament, of course! Evey first meets V when London's law enforcers called "fingers" catch her after the curfew instated by Chancellor Sutler (the enemy of the movie). The fingers were going to gang-rape her for being out late. That is until V shows up and beats them so hard they couldn't remember what they had for tea. (those Englishmen, always thinking with their weiners) V, being a gentleman, decides to treat Evey to a night on the town. But this isn't like a County Fair and ice cream date. Nope, not even close. He leads her to the top of a building and pulls out a Conductor's wand used for symphonies and faces a large statue on to of a nearby building. Evey's very curious as to why he's doing this, but then, you'll faintly hear the Overture of 1812. And just as the cannons sound in the classical score, the building is exploded from the inside, reducing it to rubble.**

The next day, V holds Evey's TV station hostage and urges them to play a pre-recorded broadcast V had made. This make-shift news report thoroughly explains why he's going to explode Parliament up and why the common people of Foggy Town should join him. **V states this will take place one year from when his broadcast was made, on the 5th of November. The rest of the movie deals with all the events that take place in that one year. Including uncovering the Government's many conspiracies, Learning about V's backstory and why he's assassinating various members of the Government, and how Evey plays into all of this.**

ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS

Ideals: This movie isn't really an action title as many (including myself) believed. **This is all about raging against the Machine and how the citizens of ANY nation have the true power INTERPRETATIE.** One of the most stressed ideas was Censorship and Individualism **COMPLEXITEIT.** Most pop/current music was taken away. Many modern and classical arts disappeared when this gov't took over. It's not just limited to that though. None of London's citizens were permitted to have religious texts or have feelings for members of the same sex.

That being said, I can introduce you to Deitrich, a closeted homosexual who is host of a late night show on television. Along with the news, Deitrich's scripts are already written, lacking voice and reason, and usually covers up the Chancellors mistakes. (whoa, how appallingly ironic) This was until one night, he throws out the written script and added his own. This one show mused on how the people of London live under control of the Chancellor. The special guests of the night were actors paid to look like Chancellor Sutler and V. V played childish pranks on Sutler throughout the show, and when they caught V, they unmasked him, only to show another Sutler. (which of course meant he's the only terrorist in London) After the show was aired, the secret police attacked Deitrich at his house. Deitrich played kind of a Malcolm X or Che Guevara for the film. I think the movie wouldn't be half of what it was without him.

Writing: I'll admit that this was one of the best written movie's I've seen since Million Dollar Baby. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** Larry and Andy Wachowski **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD** did a much better job on this than the Matrix sequels. But the bros. lose some credit simply because V for Vendetta was already a comic book published by DC Comics in the 80's. But there're quotes in here that will stick in the back of your mind for a very long time. Quotes such as "Beneath this mask there is more than flesh. There is an idea, Mr. Creedy, and ideas are bulletproof." **Instant classic.** **TJDLLOOSHEID** And then there's this view V and I both share. "People should not be afraid of their governments, governments should be afraid of their people." How true, how true.

V for Vendetta is a perfectly balanced movie. If there's a fight scene, there's an in depth conversation or plot-twist. Vendetta also covers the grounds of vengeance, life, and even love, believe it or not. **This film is simply brilliant on every level** **GEBRUIK HAT**. Natalie Portman is no Emile de Ravin, but I can let it slide this time. This movie provoked though, satisfied my taste for mayhem, and is just a good rebel-rousing movie. **Fans of Fight Club or Run Lola Run will definitely love it. Two thumbs up, two thumbs way up.** **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

-Theodore Reddinger

Review 4:

Visually impressive **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, **but surprisingly shallow** **COMPLEXITEIT**, 10 September 2006

Author: BroadswordCallinDannyBoy from Boston, MA

An alternate futuristic vision of England has the country being run by a ruthless totalitarian government who will stop at nothing to remain in power. People live in fear and are remarkably passive as a result, save for one masked freedom fighter known as V who fights with cunning and cleverness to rally the people of England to end the dictatorship.

Visually this film is quite a stunner **SUBTILITEIT**. **No excessive computer effects, but nonetheless the sets and cinematography are first rate and do a great job and creating a dark world** **SUBTILITEIT**. Also there are many visual symbols as well as creative uses of words that start with 'V.' Added on top of solid acting and direction. **For such a faceless performance, Hugo Weaving (who's behind a mask the whole time) plays very well at conveying the character V** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. However that's the movie version of V, the one in the source graphic novel is quite different.

The problem is the film's **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** **message and it is ridiculously shallow - "facism is bad."** **INTERPRETATIE - COMPLEXITEIT** That is really it. For a such a lengthy and well produced film it is a real shame, though not much a surprise, that the attention was on the visual, but the metaphorical and philosophical are hardly attended to. There is a lot of dialog and room for for what could have been interesting thoughts of characters reflecting on their world, but it ends up being just routine. **For instance when Finch is discussing with his partner the possibility of a government conspiracy they do nothing, but state the obvious - is it**

worth going against such a powerful government, are we afraid to, and so on. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** Nothing really that hasn't been done before in countless other stories. **ORIGINALITEIT**

Added to the fact that the film ends in an amazingly dull and ridiculously cliché big explosion. **ORIGINALITEIT – SPANNING/SUSPENS** It makes sense as you watch the film, but that doesn't mean that it is interesting. How much more interesting would it be when the shadowy freedom fighter V would think of a way to topple the government by not using methods that it uses against its own people? The film just ends up being almost a more mature version of the Star Wars story - eventually the good triumphs over the evil with a big bang. Star Wars had the Death Star and here we have several buildings in London. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. So it is good, but retreading on old ground with nothing new to present has never scored a film big points. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. 7/10

Review 5:

Pretentious, **GEBRUIK HAT** and not even for a good purpose, 14 September 2006

Author: TensorsFloatingDisk from Riverside, CA

Well, the critics have spoken, **the box office has spoken** **FILM ALS PRODUCT**, the fans have spoken, and now I will speak:

This movie is junk.

Anyone who thinks this is high-flown political allegory should take a remedial class in civics, and another in history, and yet a third in rhetoric. Anyone who thinks its art needs to take a shower.

V for Vendetta has none of the flash of the Matrix **VERGELIJKING FILM**, but all of the pretentious pseudo-intellectual "philosophizin'." **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** It oversimplifies both politics and human nature to the point that none of the characters are remotely believable, nor is their situation. **COMPLEXITEIT** Despite this, it manages to fail even at the level of popcorn fare, yielding not even a satisfactory final scene. Simply put, it's not even technically successful.

Statements which should be the clear bulwark for the opposing forces are mumbled unintelligibly through several layers of cardboard (Mr. Weaving's voice is often-times inaudible. Don't believe me? Go look at the message boards: half of the threads are requests for clarifications on the inaudible dialog). **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT** Confrontations like the final fight scene, which should be titanic, are instead grungy and poorly lit (seriously, someone buy the cameraman a mining helmet or something).

And then there are the characters wandering through this pasteboard wasteland. **The main bad guy is never seen, and never provides his rationale, rendering him beyond flimsy and certainly no threat.** **INTERPRETATIE** The main hero is similarly opaque, since the filmmakers decided obscurity would somehow seem like wisdom to the sweating masses of fanboys who elevated this dreck. **The most emotionally affecting voice comes through a long flashback sequence from a character long-dead.** **ONTROERING** That should tell you something about the characters.

And finally, the politics: shoddy, ill-researched, and venal. All the characters we're supposed to think of as 'noble' seem motivated by the most pettily personal of reasons. **CONTEXT** **MAATSCHAPPELIJK**, with the arguable exception of the main police officer investigating V's actions. **That the system would rise, then collapse so spontaneously is not only unrealistic** **SUBTILITEIT**, but irresponsible since young and foolish filmgoers are apt to mistake anarchy for freedom. My worst possible curse upon them would be that they get precisely what they ask

for.

Thank all Gods that may be that their safety, the arts, and the world, are in better hands than these.

5 User generated reviews: 30 days of night.

Review 1:

Best Vampire Movie in Over a Decade, 23 October 2007

Author: [David H. Schleicher](#) from New Jersey, USA

As night begins to fall for a thirty day spell over a small Alaskan outpost village, a motley crew of vampires comes waltzing in for a feast in David Slade's **REGISSEUR BENOEMD** adaptation of the graphic novel, "30 Days of Night **CONTEXT CBA**." Ever since "Interview with the Vampire" vampires have been depicted in films as something hip, cool, and sexy. **VERGELIJKING ANDERE FILMS** Recently the idea of becoming a vampire is like making a fashion statement or becoming a Scientologist. In "30 Days of Night" the vampires are nameless, cunning, animal-like bloodsuckers and far from mindless zombies **ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIEF** (which have been more popular of late). Finally, vampires are restored to film as monsters to be feared and not as some sympathetic and alluring subculture.

The film grabs you from its opening shot of a man walking through a desolate snow covered landscape away from an ominous boat docked in the ice and never lets go. Director Slade wisely avoids many of the seizure-inducing trappings of recent horror films **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. Sure, there are the prerequisite quick-cuts in the intimate scenes of carnage, but there are also haunting wide-angled shots and one expertly staged bird's-eye-view crane shot when the vampires first begin dragging people out of their houses into the street. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID** While successfully adapting some of the great imagery from the graphic novel, Slade is fully aware that this is still a film and shies away from CGI and overly-stylized lighting and effects that would detract from the sense of realism necessary in a far-fetched horror film such as this. **SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID**

Slade also makes good use of his cast. Danny Huston is perfectly creepy as the vampires' **SPANNING SUSPENS** leader. Josh Hartnett, who is typically miscast and emotionless, actually fits well the role of a wooden Sheriff of a remote Alaskan town. Ben Foster, who always overacts, is used effectively here in a bit role as an over-the-top Reinfield-like character who ushers the vampires' arrival in town. Melissa George is pretty and sympathetic as Hartnett's estranged wife. **FOCUS ACTEURS/ TALENT** Like many serious horror films of recent memory ("Dawn of the Dead" or "The Descent") **VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS** the film attempts some character development that is often "emo" but never overplays its hand. **KARAKTER ONTWIKKELING**

Aside from being better directed and better acted than your run-of-the-mill horror flick, "30 Days of Night" is also fantastically gory. **CONNECTIE ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** Decaptation aficionados will especially rejoice **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Refreshing, too, is the way it takes its gore and action dead seriously. There are no silly one-liners or graphic sight gags. The characters are deeply affected by what they witness and what they have to do to survive. **ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE** This is pure horror, and it's relentless. **SPANNING SUSPENS**

Yes, there are some missteps with the film's pacing and some huge leaps of logic in the amount of time that passes between events **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. However, for the sheer originality of its central conceit, the intensity of the gore, and the haunting quality of many of its signature shots, David Slade's "30 Days of Night" is the most exhilarating horror film since Danny Boyle's original "28 Days Later" and the best vampire film since Francis Ford Coppola delivered "Bram Stoker's Dracula" back in 1992. **ORIGINALITEIT/INNOVATIE** **VERGELIJKING REGISSEUR**

Review 2:

A Breath of Fresh Bloody Air for the Vampire Legend!!, 19 October 2007

Author: [czarnobog](#) from United States

"30 Days of Night" is a very welcome addition to the ranks of vampire movies. This one is strictly for horror fans, not for doily-draped gender-confused romantics dreaming of third degree hickies from pretty fanged lovers in New Orleans.

The fun begins in the first frame ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, courtesy of the evocative setting, a snowbound town at the Northern edge of America. The only iffy moment comes with the introduction of Josh Hartnett as the town sheriff. Young and movie star handsome, he threatens to come off as unbelievable, like the Ben Affleck sheriff in "Phantoms." SUBTILITEIT - VERGELIJKING FILMS Hartnett, however, despite his young years, has the gravitas to pull off this role. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT and director David Slade REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD gets masterful performances from all the fine actors in this film.

Melissa George is scrumptiously beautiful. (Her mouth is so cute it should be patented.) She's also an excellent actress, who horror fans should remember from the recent (and highly recommended) remake of The Amityville Horror. With her endearing little girl face and keen talent for playing it straight under the most fantastic of circumstances, she's likable, sympathetic and totally believable in this role.

What really sets this film apart though is its portrayal of the vampires. Someone obviously boned up on ancient vampire legends, because these are the most authentic movie vampires since Boris Karloff's "wurdalak" in Mario Bava's "Black Sabbath" 40 years ago. VERGELIJKING FILMS

Speaking in a strange Eastern European tongue (Romanian? or Hungarian?) these creatures bear the remains of human personalities, but are purely evil; cunning and vicious and blood-stained, like vampires were before Bram Stoker introduced the "new improved" (i.e. sanitized) Victorian model and Anne Rice gussied it up even more.

Fans of Kathryn Bigelow's "Near Dark" and John Carpenter's "Vampires" will appreciate the high action and body count VOORSPELLING REACTIE. The story is a bit slimmer than either of those two films (it is based on a comic book, after all) COMPLEXITEIT but it's very atmospheric GEBRUIK HAT and suspenseful SPANNING/SUSPENS, with superb production values all around.

The visual efx are topnotch FOCUS SPEKTAKEL, especially when they're subtle, such as snowflakes adding their magical luster to a scene SUBTILITEIT. The special make-up efx (blood and guts et al) are completely believable, but aside from a few very graphic images and much spilled blood in the snow, are not as overwhelming as some overly squeamish reviewers have claimed.

The cinematography is gorgeous, and is enhanced by the seamlessly integrated visual effects noted above.

If you're in the mood for a nicely paced, well-produced, superbly directed movie that'll satisfy your craving for a dose of traditional horror, you can't go wrong with this one. VOORSPELLING REACTIE

Review 3:

One of the most effective horror movies I've seen in a long time, 27 October 2007

Author: [Thomas Plante \(TJ1380@gmail.com\)](#) from United States

"30 Days of Night" is easily one of the best horror movies I've seen in a very long time mostly because everyone involved seemed to know exactly what it takes to make a decent horror

movie. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** It's not obscene amounts of gore or monsters jumping out at the camera that make a movie scary. It's creepy atmosphere that makes a movie particularly scary, and this movie does a great job at creating the kind of atmosphere that fills the viewer with the kind of dread that so many movies fail to achieve **SPANNING/SUSPENS**. It's not perfect, but it's still better than just about every horror movie I've seen since "The Descent" (which also relied on a creepy atmosphere to fill the viewer with a sense of dread and hopelessness). **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

This movie is set in the small town of Barrow, Alaska, the northernmost town in the U.S. Because it is so far up north, there comes a time every winter where the sun doesn't rise for 30 days. The fact that this translates into a month without sunlight attracts a group of vampires who attack the town and spend the month feeding on its citizens. Eventually only a handful of humans remain in town, and they must survive the month without starving, freezing, or being killed by the vampires. It's a fairly simple concept, yet the director makes it work incredibly well.

COMPLEXITEIT There is a sense of dread and hopelessness that permeates this entire film. Barrow is a town that appears to be cut off from the rest of the world. It seems to be surrounded by a sea of white on all sides, and the citizens seem to be stuck in a state of depression. Barrow seems to be the worst place in the world to be, and that's before the sun sets and the vampires show up. When the vampires do make themselves known, that sense of isolation and hopelessness turns into a feeling of dread that doesn't go away. One really gets the sense that there is no escape for the small group of survivors. **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** This feeling is made all the more real by the long periods between the vampire attacks. Normally I consider long periods where not much happens a bad thing, but here it works in the film's favor. We may not always see the vampires, but their presence is always felt. At any given time in the movie one can see blood splattered onto snow and hear the distant screams and occasional gunfire of yet another one of Barrow's citizens getting killed, and it's easy to get the feeling that any of the main characters could be the next to die. The vampires themselves are also unlike any we've seen in movies for some time. They aren't the kind of seductive and charming vampires that seem to show up in every other horror movie. These vampires are feral, ruthless, and sadistic, with sharp crocodile-like teeth and bloodstained clothes. There's nothing romantic about them or their actions; they just want to kill people and drink their blood. It helps that they get far less screen time than the human characters; normally we only see them as shadows in the background stalking their prey. When they do attack, it's incredibly vicious and horrifyingly violent (the first large-scale attack on the town is a particular highlight of this film). This viciousness adds to the hopelessness and vulnerability of the humans while making the vampires seem like some of the scariest movie monsters to come along in a while. **SPANNING/SUSPENS**

If I can find any fault in this movie, it's that the ending seems a bit contrived and cliché. It doesn't take too much away from the movie though; **ORIGINALITEIT** to complain about it is really nitpicking more than anything. Overall it's one of the best horror movies I've seen in a long time, and easily the best vampire movie to come along in years. I would definitely recommend it, especially since it's a good alternative to the endless "torture porn" we've been seeing from this genre for the last few years.

Review 4:

Maybe my expectations were just a little too high, 20 October 2007

Author: [Kristine \(kristinedrama14@msn.com\)](mailto:kristinedrama14@msn.com) from Chicago, Illinois

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

30 Days of Night was one of the horror films I was looking forward to most this year. I mean from the moment I saw the trailer early spring, I was looking up on IMDb when the release date was, it was agony knowing that I had to wait until October. Finally, last night, opening night **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, it was storming in my city, so it was like the most perfect time to go see this movie. So my friend and I saw this last night and the theater was packed, when

the movie ended, there was only one person who started to clap, but then stopped immediately when he saw that there was no one else clapping. While my friend liked this movie, I wasn't too thrilled. ENTERTAINMENT VARYING It didn't seem like a real vampire film, more like Night of the Living Dead or 28 Days Later, where this group is just hiding from the vampires. VERGELIJKING FILMS Not to mention that things were just not well explained, but maybe I need to read the book to get it, because this movie failed to explain certain situations. COMPLEXITEIT

Eben is the sheriff of the northern most town in the U.S., also it is night for 30 days, the roads shut down and some of the population leaves and some stays. Things go extremely bad though when a gang of vampires decides that this is the perfect town to move to. They pretty much get most of the townspeople, except for Eben, his ex-wife, Stella, his little brother, Jake, and a couple more of their friends. Since the vamps have cut the power and had someone burn all the cell phones, it's impossible for the gang to escape, but they are going to try to make it for the month. But that's going to be tough when the vamps spoiled their dinner the first day and now need more happy meals on foot.

The plot was incredibly good and original ORIGINALITEIT, I was so thrilled that this seemed to be like a real vampire movie. But unfortunately there were things that were just not well explained. Now like how the vampires seemed to want to be known in this world, but then later on they try to "hide" what they did by burning the town, it didn't make much sense. COMPLEXITEIT Then how did The Stranger fit into this whole mess? Was he a potential vampire? Was he promised to live if he did these things for the vamps or promised to be turned into a vampire? Then also why did Josh Hartnett become a vampire? I know it was to gain super strength, but still, it seemed kinda silly for him to jump so quickly. Not to mention the love story between him and Stella didn't have good enough chemistry to pay attention too. I feel bad bashing this film because I so badly wanted to like it, but it just didn't pull through for me.

Review 5:

Illogical, obnoxious, and genuinely insulting to the intelligence--just like every other modern horror movie out there..., 22 October 2007

Author: Polaris_DiB from United States

***** This review may contain spoilers *****

I didn't have time to see "Into the Wild," so I thought I'd watch the OTHER Alaskan adventure story, this one involving vampires and Josh Hartnett. I should have just gone home. 90% of the action is generic SHOCK!camerashakeCUT! BS that presents absolutely no sense of action or really idea of what's going on (and HOW can a vampire drink the blood if it's shaking its head back and forth like that?!), and the writing and directing is completely illogical. COMPLEXITEIT Somehow we're supposed to accept that these vampires are capable of preception enough to plan to go to Alaska during winter in order to vacation in the 30 days of darkness, plus existential quotes about the absence of God and whatnot, and yet they don't even seem to have the simple intelligence to ration out the 150 citizens of Barrow over time or even TO SHUT UP WHILE HUNTING! SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT How many panning shots of vampires moving down hallways hissing loudly did I have to sit through? A lion don't roar when stalking an antelope, people!

But the most insulting scene of all, unfortunately, I have to completely give away the ending to to describe. So here we go: SPOILERS, you have been warned, but on the other hand I'd rather you read this please so that you don't go see this stupid movie. Okay, so Josh Hartnett decides he can't beat the vampires without their powers, so he injects himself with some vampire blood and goes out to lay the smack-down on the leader. Following an fight sequence (the only good thing I can say about it is that it's better than the showdown

between Rayne and Billy the Kidd in "Bloodrayne II: Deliverance"), VERGELIJKING FILMS - POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR he defeats the leader, of course. Wide shot: Josh Hartnett standing in the middle of a group of vampires. Cut to: shot of Hartnett's love interest and some kid she saved, looking dramatic and scared. Cut back to, again, wide shot of Hartnett. Vampires are gone. Where did they go? They never appear again. No allusion is made to them leaving. No action is presented to describe them leaving. No ellipses is used to insinuate that there will be a sequel. ABSOLUTELY NO NARRATIVE LOGIC FINISHES THE STORY. COMPLEXITEIT

I can only come up with three reasons why the director did this: 1) He's lazy and didn't feel like finishing the scene, instead preferring to move on to the next one. If that's the case he should have been fired and sued for the money the producers spent on him, then they should have hired a real director to finish the story, but I shouldn't have had to see this cut. 2) He forgot that the vampires were there. Which means he's extremely stupid and should have been fired and sued for the money the producers spent on him, then they should have hired a real director to finish the story, but I shouldn't have had to see this cut. Or 3) he thought that that was a great experimental/original way to end the movie with an open ending, which means he's both stupid AND pretentious, which means that he should have been fired and sued for the money the producers spent on him, they they should have hired a real director to finish the story, and not only should I have not had to see this cut, but he should never work in Hollywood ever again.

Other than that I rather enjoyed myself ENTERTAINMENTERVARING. I honestly think that the entire budget was put on one single sequence involving a man named Billy losing his arm, turning into a vampire, and having his head chopped off with a fire ax all in the course of maybe three shots. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL That was gorgeous.SUBTILITEIT And when the director finally stopped shaking the damn camera long enough to settle down on the survivalist aspects of film, and the actors given a chance to, you know, do something besides scream for sound (did I mention the sound editing is terrible in this movie? I think that's kind of important. It's very inconsistent and at one point completely oblivious), then sometimes something resembling fear and horror emerges.

--PolarisDiB

Digitale bijlage (2): Gecodeerde offline reviews

5 Offline reviews: X men

Review 1: New York Times

X-Men (2000)

July 14, 2000

FILM REVIEW; Pow! Misfit Heroes To the Rescue! Zap!

By ELVIS MITCHELL
Published: July 14, 2000

Cyclops (James Marsden) unleashes bolts of energy from his eyes and has to wear shielding glasses to keep those rays in check. Jean Grey (Famke Janssen) is telepathic and telekinetic. Storm (Halle Berry) can control the weather, conjuring lightning bolts to do with as she will. The hotheaded, confrontational Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) has superstrength, healing abilities that allow him to recover from almost any injury, and a metal alloy grafted onto his skeleton that gives him claws he can project from his knuckles. And Rogue (Anna Paquin) absorbs the essence of others, which makes her an energy vampire; she discovers her power when she steals her first kiss and almost kills the boy.

These are the X-Men, at least the ones that made it into Bryan Singer's **REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD** movie adaptation. It's disheartening to see the X-Men depicted so earnestly here, given what they've been through -- **ONTROERING** the cancellation of their comic book and their resurrection as the most popular characters in Marvel Comics history. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** Clumsy when it should be light on its feet, the movie takes itself even more seriously than the comic book and its fans do, which is a superheroic achievement. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

In the movie, as in the comics, mutants -- Homo superior -- are the next evolutionary stage for human beings, and they're persecuted because (gasp) they're different. The X-Men are mutants and misfits shepherded into altruism by the compassionate mutant Prof. Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart), who has the ability to read minds and affect the thoughts of others. It's a part Mr. Stewart was born to play: he has the vocal command to convince you that he knows what you're thinking. (His name went out as perfect casting in Internet chat rooms as soon as talks about an X-Men movie materialized.)

Xavier's nemesis is his former mutant friend, Magneto (Ian McKellen), whose roiling syllables make you want to see him square off against Mr. Stewart. **Listening to them trill their vowels at each other is one of the movie's few pleasures, ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** since the parallels to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Xavier) and Malcolm X (Magneto) are made wincingly plain; **INTERPRETATIE** Magneto promises to defeat his opponents "by any means necessary." Mr. Stewart and Mr. McKellen are a pair of austere hams, and their wrestling is the only consistently enjoyable note in the film. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** When they go golden throat to golden throat, it is like watching members of another species in action. Most of the other battles in "X-Men," fights between Xavier's team and Magneto's Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, consist of stuntmen taking blows and being jerked across rooms the length of high-school cafeterias.

When Senator Robert Kelly (Bruce Davison, using a pinched voice) leads a charge against all mutants, he causes a boiling fury in Magneto, a Nazi concentration camp survivor. After the

X-Men were created in 1963, almost 20 years passed before this aspect of Magneto's character was written into the comics, and it makes sense to use it in the movie **CONTEXT CBA**. His specific goal is revenge against anti-mutant bigots, which elevates Magneto above the routine motive of world domination. But his methods are so uncontrollable that they cause death.

Magneto's forces include the mountainous Sabertooth (Tyler Mane, who brings his mast-size World Wrestling Federation persona to the role); the Toad (Ray Park), who leaps and unleashes a tongue several feet long, and the shape-shifter Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos). In the best piece of super model casting of all time, she is deep-sea-blue, with scales pasted onto her body; you can almost hear Dennis Rodman sighing in envy. She moves well, too.

The movie does an extensive job of cramming in much of the mythology from the comics, loyal dollops of exposition that are both touching and ponderous, a setup to a sequel **SUBTILITEIT**. The compassionate Xavier wants to reach an accord with both Magneto and the human race, with peaceful coexistence as his goal. At his private school, Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters (and before you giggle, that name is right out of the comics, too), where he houses and trains young mutants, there are cameos by X-Men like Bobby Drake, the Iceman. (When he speaks, wisps of frost emanate from his mouth.) **When Wolverine** comments on the black leather X-Men outfits, which look like something you would see on the counter staff at a bondage version of McDonald's, Cyclops responds, "What would you have us wear? Yellow spandex?" **CONTEXT CBA** The line will get a laugh from comics fans, since the original X-Men and Wolverine costumes featured that fabric. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

The filmmakers' love for these characters and their histories is obvious, but it's just as obvious that they doesn't have any distance. There are elements that work on the page that just don't lend themselves to film. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR** The tortured, shy Cyclops is reduced to a decent-guy cipher in the movie, and he is made even more vague because his eyes are never visible; his suffering is clear to comics readers because of interior monologues provided via thought balloons. (Storm and Jean Grey are less defined.) That's the kind of problem that devotion to the source material doesn't help.

What happened to Mr. Singer, the director who massaged the parlor-trick malice of "The Usual Suspects" into an event? His adaptation of Stephen King's short story "Apt Pupil" had a leaden quality not unlike that of "X-Men." **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The two-fisted Wolverine, well played by Mr. Jackman **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, is perhaps the only other semi-rounded character who animates the picture besides Xavier and Magneto. He lives to fight, a boisterous tragic hero without complication. (Bits of his back-story, lifted from the "Weapon X" comic series, are suggested here.) **CONTEXT CBA**

Things have changed quite a bit since 1963, or 1975, the year Wolverine and Storm first showed up. These days, Magneto would probably turn up on "The Howard Stern Show," insulting dull, weak Homo sapiens. It might have been better to have the characters express themselves through action rather than having to explain themselves in the style of their comic book origins **SUBTILITEIT - COMPLEXITEIT**. The clear, bold strokes of comic books are what is needed.

The X-men comics' creators, Stan Lee (who is also featured in a cameo) and Jack Kirby, had a genius for such touches. The "X-Men" series was a precursor of the WB television network; the comic book was one of the few popular venues in the 1960's in which complex teenage characters were focal points instead of bland grown-up do-gooders like Superman, the world's only well-adjusted split personality. **CONTEXT CBA - CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

Perhaps that was the reason "X-Men" comics struggled and failed initially; the world wasn't ready for misunderstood young martyrs with special powers saving the world and living through unrequited flushes of love. The alternation of nonstop-action FOCUS SPEKTAKEL and lower-lip-chewing heartbreak -- action melodrama -- was what Mr. Lee pioneered in "Spider-Man" and fried to a crispy crunch in "X-Men." (It may be what attracted one of the film's co-producers, Lauren Shuler Donner, since her husband Richard's "Lethal Weapon" brought the same thing to the big screen.) VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS

In 1963, when the threat of nuclear radiation was filling the screens of drive-in theaters with monsters from Japan and monsters in our own backyard, Marvel Comics came up with a benevolent spin and the X-Men were the result. To make it work as a film, someone needed to use the same brand of inventiveness. This movie is proof that imitation is the sincerest form of flattening.

"X-Men" is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned). It includes some profanity, mutant-versus-mutant violence and some human endangerment.

Review 2: Washington Post

'X-Men' – Tasty but Not Filling

By Desson Howe
Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, July 14, 2000

Here's what I learned from "X-Men": Puberty is hell on mutants.

And in this visually entertaining FOCUS SPEKTAKEL - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE but empty adaptation COMPLEXITEIT of the wildly popular comic book series, adolescence and adulthood are even freakier. This emerging X-generation of genetically abnormal men and women – living among humans in the not too distant future – is doomed to emotional turbulence.

For one thing, living with their awesome, cyber-kinetic, psychic powers isn't easy. And humankind is extremely hostile toward these "freaks of nature." A certain Sen. Robert Kelly (Bruce Davison), for instance, is pushing for McCarthy-style legislation to brand and expose these mutants.

Now, in all fairness to the bigoted, you can't blame humankind for noticing a guy like Cyclops (James Marsden), whose laser-powered vision cuts potholes through buildings, mountains, anything. And you can't fault people for getting a wee bit alarmed at Storm (Halle Berry), a platinum-blond siren whose Pandora's box of wind, thunder and lightning makes "The Perfect Storm" look like cloudy weather.

And then there's Toad (Ray Park), whose whiplash of a tongue can wrap around bars like steel creeper and transport him from ledge to ledge like Tarzan.

With these guys, no day is casual.

As the movie opens, a teenage girl (Anna Paquin) is on the verge of a sexual encounter with her boyfriend. But she has – how do we say this? – issues about being touched. She tends to suck the life out of people, when it happens. And she can absorb their memories too. Feeling

alienated from everyone, she runs away, eventually hooking up with an X-drifter known as Wolverine or Logan (Hugh Jackman).

The two soon find themselves caught up in a major X-Men tussle, a holy war between Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) who believes that X-Men and humans can all get along, and Erik Lehnsherr, a.k.a. Magneto (Ian McKellen), a sort of Malcolm-X-Man, who wants to lead his followers to glory by any means necessary.

"X-Men," directed by Bryan "The Usual Suspects" Singer **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**, works best when you watch it with lighthearted abandon. It's great fun to watch the X-Men and their awesome power **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDES**, thanks to tremendous visual and digitally animated effects by Digital Domain **SUBTILITEIT**. And Singer, with co-writers Tom DeSanto and David Hayter, keeps things amusing from time to time with comic book-style one-liners.

I cannot speak to the "X-Men"-ophiles who will, no doubt, uncover all manner of wonder, disappointment or whatever upon seeing this. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** But I will say it's pretty neat to watch steely talons spring from the hands of Wolverine, when a big, bad bartender holds a shotgun to his back. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

One swipe of those retractable adamantium claws, and the shotgun disintegrates into scrap metal.

"When they come out, does it hurt?" asks a girl called Rogue, referring to his claws.

"Every time," says Wolverine.

But it's the effects, not Wolverine's pain, that govern this movie. Even though Singer, DeSanto and Hayter bend over backward to honor "X-Men" creator Stan Lee's deeper agendas about racism and intolerance, the movie never quite hits the emotional high notes. **CONTEXT CBA – INTERPRETATIE- SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** And as the inevitable finale draws near, with disturbing global consequences for X-Men, humanity and *blah-di blah-di blah*, the movie's sense of originality tumbles screaming from the Statue of Liberty, where much of the climactic clashing occurs **ORIGINALITEIT**. The movie's enjoyable on the surface, but I suspect many people, even die-hards, will be less enthusiastic about what lies – or doesn't – underneath. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**

Review 3:

A Few Good X-Men

Outcast mutants battle to save a world that hates them

San Fransisco Chronicle

Bye: Bob Graham

14-07-2000

Seeing ``X-Men" at times is like getting a free meal at a Salvation Army mission: You have to sit through a certain amount of preaching to get to the good stuff.

This feast of fantasy is worth it.

``X-Men" is an Xtraordinary distillation of -- and new riff on -- the long-running comic-book series.

The most anticipated movie title of the summer for generations of fans -- the Marvel Comics characters on which it is based go back to the mid-'60s **CONTEXT CBA** -- is, not coincidentally, aimed at the biggest generation of moviegoers -- teenagers.

These outcast mutants with super powers -- X-Men, not teenagers -- **play right into adolescent angst** **INTERPRETATIE**:

The mutation of their special gifts occurs at puberty. Those caught on the cusp of higher development are treated by the world with suspicion and distrust. They variously want to save the world or destroy it. They disappear into their own secret underground. **This is a digital-effects extravaganza** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** that also works on the emotional level **COMPLEXITEIT**. **There are neatly placed flashes of humor.** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** ``X-Men" is the most effective movie embodiment of comic-book characters -- with one unfortunate but not fatal exception -- **since Tim Burton's ``Batman" in 1989 (or the graphic novel-based ``The Crow" in 1994).** **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

A pervasive sense of darkness and pain figures in them all.

Two bands of mutants, the X-Men and their shadow counterparts, vie -- those who want to save the world that shuns them versus those who want to let it fry in its own hatred. They are positive and negative charges of the same battery.

If the battle results in a smugly superior egghead (Patrick Stewart) mentoring the X-Men, there is an interestingly conflicted villain (Ian McKellen) as his opposite number.

These characters have emblematic names like Cyclops (James Marsden) and Storm (Halle Berry). Best of them all is the blade-fisted, haunted bad boy Wolverine (Hugh Jackman). No one knows what Mystique, who should be called Morph, will look like next.

Their various powers only begin with telekinesis and telepathy and include an eye-beam jolt and a lethally wicked tongue. There is the dubious power of extracting someone's life force by a mere touch, a curse for Rogue (Anna Paquin). There is Wolverine's saving grace of self-healing.

Jackman, an intense and soulful Australian actor, makes the claw-sprouting Wolverine stand out from the pack **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. The sultry-voiced Berry, in blond wig, makes her relatively small role seem bigger. Paquin is especially affecting.

The one exception to effective presentation of the team of superheroes is Marsden as Cyclops, through no fault of his own. **Tell me, what is the dumbest thing someone could do to an actor? Cover up his eyes. Except for one scene, Marsden must wear either his Cyclops visor or dark glasses.** **SUBTILITEIT** People have to remember what he looks like from TV (``Party of Five"), and those who have never seen this rising star hardly will see him in this film.

You'd think they might have learned from LeVar Burton in ``Star Trek: The Next Generation." Covering up an actor's eyes makes him unwatchable. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** One of the few lapses of imagination in ``X-Men" is the failure to come up with a better way to present this eye-zapper. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**

To his credit, Marsden still makes Cyclops' arrogance flash through. **His rivalry with Wolverine produces a couple of smart-ass exchanges and the movie's best sight gag** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** -- the gesture is a very old-fashioned digital effect.

Stewart must bear an actor's burden of providing mouthfuls of high-mindedness and exposition. Some viewers may prefer figuring it out for themselves. Surrounded by beatifically adoring mutant acolytes, he comes off as the center of a precious coterie, such as Ayn Rand's. He's such a vivid presence that it's too bad he shows little interest in playing villains.

That role here is left to McKellen, who finds the depth in it. This is a film with a message. It involves social outcasts and intolerance -- there are specific references to Nazism and McCarthyism INTERPRETATIE – CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK. Other interpretations are clearly out there, so to speak.

One of them gets a subliminal spin from McKellen's public role as a gay actor. Stewart, as Xavier, advocates assimilation with the "normal" world. As Magneto, McKellen represents the separatists -- "anonymity is a mutant's first defense against the world's hostility" -- but in his performance, bitterness contends with a latent yearning to belong.

The handling of the amazingly detailed computerized effects rises SUBTILITEIT to an aesthetic level of digital imaging GEBRUIK HAT. The discovery of Rogue in a railway station is an awesome transition. Another character's watery exit is not only shocking, it is an unforgettable image of life slipping away. ..

Review 4: Los Angeles Times

X-Men Gen-'X'

By KENNETH TURAN, TIMES FILM CRITIC

Friday July 14, 2000

To be a teenager is to feel different, misunderstood, perhaps even a bit of a mutant. It was the gift of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the creators of the Marvel comic decades ago, to realize with "X-Men" that conflicted twentysomething and teenage superheroes would tap into that universal "I don't belong" feeling and raise it to another level CONTEXT CBA.

Here are impressively powerful people saying things like "Stay away from my girl," getting crushes on cute guys and worrying what's going to happen on that first kiss. By making the individual X-Men both natural for the core audience to identify with yet potent beyond imagining (a dynamic similar to the one that helps power the Harry Potter books CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR), Lee and Kirby came up with a comic dynasty that has now been turned into a solid summer entertainment. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Directed by the gifted Bryan Singer ("The Usual Suspects") REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD and credited to screenwriter David Hayter, though several other writers were reportedly involved, "X-Men" squeezes an awful lot--maybe too much--into a brisk 95 minutes. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR There are 10 mutants, each with a different superpower to introduce, a plot to unfold, jokes to make, visuals complex enough to employ more than a dozen effects houses to display and enough action to keep 60 stunt people occupied FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. So much is happening you feel the immediate need of a sequel just as a reward for absorbing it all.

Helping make everything convincing is a diverse cast headed by British heavyweights Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellen as an earlier generation of mutants, the O.M.s so to speak, old friends who have turned into rival mentors for the hearts and minds of the next generation.

Stewart plays Professor Charles Francis Xavier, able to read minds, influence thought, even erase memories if it's a slow day. He runs Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, a high-tech version of Potter's Hogwarts, where mutants-in-training learn to control their powers and an

inner circle of accomplished X-Men get to wander around in nifty, tight-fitting uniforms.

Those outfitted include the telekinetic and photogenic Jean Grey (Famke Janssen); Storm (Halle Berry in a striking blond wig), who need only roll her eyes to create all kinds of weather; and Cyclops (James Marsden), who wears a stylish visor to protect the world from the destructive bolts that issue from his eyes.

On the other side is Erik Lehnsherr (McKellen, who starred in Singer's "Apt Pupil"), code name Magneto, known both for his ability to do anything he wants with metal and his complete disdain for the ordinary run of humanity. He sees a war between mutants and the rest of the world as inevitable and warns Xavier ominously, "Don't get in my way."

Equally irritable are the mutants who look to Magneto for guidance. That would be the enormous Sabretooth (former professional wrestler Tyler Mane); Toad, the man with the 15-foot tongue (Ray Park, memorable as Darth Maul in "The Phantom Menace"); and the treacherous Mystique (top model Rebecca Romijn-Stamos), who can shape-shift with the best of them.

Bringing the conflict between Xavier and Magneto to a head is a movement, led by weasly U.S. Sen. Robert Kelly (Bruce Davison), to make mutants register with the government as if they were sex offenders. The senator has no qualms about manipulating a wave of anti-mutant hysteria ("Send Mutants to the Moon Forever," reads one demonstrator's sign) that leads to a U.N.-sponsored summit on "the mutant phenomenon and its impact on the world stage" that will bring 200 heads of state to New York's Ellis Island.

Holding the balance of power between these two groups are the film's most conflicted (and most interesting characters), Rogue (Oscar winner Anna Paquin) and the feral, dangerous and well-named Wolverine (Australian actor Hugh Jackman).

While Rogue is new to her ability to absorb the qualities and the very life force of anyone she touches, Wolverine has been a berserker for quite some time. You'd be angry too, if a rare metal named adamantium had been fused to your entire skeleton during a past you can't remember, giving you retractable claws that painfully shoot out from your hands whenever you feel threatened. Even a gift for instant healing isn't compensation enough for that.

With a face of fury partially covered by mutton-chop sideburns, Jackman is this film's star and brings a necessary level of acting intensity to the project **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. While "X-Men" doesn't take your breath away wire-to-wire the way "The Matrix" did **VERGELIJKING FILMS**, it's an accomplished piece of work with considerable pulp watchability to it **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. And having a self-referential sense of humor **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** ("You actually go outside in these things?" Wolverine says when face-to-face with an X-uniform) **makes the special effects go down that much smoother.** **SUBTILITEIT**

Review 5: Chicago Sun- Times

X-Men

BY ROGER EBERT / July 14, 2000

The origin story is crucial to all superhero epics, from the gods of ancient Greece right down to Superman's parents. Next in importance is an explanation of superpowers: what they are, how they work. That's reasonable when there is one superhero, like Superman or the Crow, but in "[X-Men](#)," with eight major characters and more in supporting roles, the movie gets top-heavy. At the halfway mark, it has just about finished introducing the characters.

That matches my experience of the "[X-Men](#)" comic books. The characters spend an inordinate amount of time accounting for themselves. Action spills across full pages as the heroes splatt and kerrruunch each other, but the dialogue balloons are like little advertisements for themselves, as they describe their powers, limitations and motivations. **CONTEXT CBA**

Since the Marvel Comics empire hopes "[X-Men](#)" is the first entry in a franchise, it's

understandable that the setups would play an important role in the first film **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**. If only there were more to the payoff. The events that end the movie are sort of anticlimactic **ORIGINALITEIT - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**, and the special effects, while energetic, are not as persuasive as they might be **SUBTILITEIT** (at one point an airplane clearly looks like a model, bouncing as it lands on water).

"X-Men" is at least not a manic editing frenzy for atrophied attention spans **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. It's restrained and introspective for a superhero epic, and fans of the comic books may like that. **COMPLEXITEIT - VOORSPELLING REACTIE** Graphic novels (as they sometimes deserve to be called) take themselves as seriously as the ones without pictures, and you can tell that here when the opening scene shows Jews being forced into death camps in Poland in 1944. One could argue that the Holocaust is not appropriate subject matter for an action movie based on a comic book, but having talked to some "X-Men" fans I believe that in their minds the medium is as deep and portentous as, say, "Sophie's Choice." **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** The Holocaust scene introduces Magneto ([Ian McKellen](#)) as a child; his mental powers twist iron gates out of shape. The narrator informs us that "evolution takes thousands and thousands of years," which is putting it mildly, and that we live in an age of great evolutionary leaps forward. Some of the X-Men develop paranormal powers which cannot be accounted for by the strictly physical mutations which form the basis of Darwinian theory; I get restless when real science is evoked in the name of pseudoscience, but, hey, that's just me.

Magneto's opponent in "X-Men" is Xavier ([Patrick Stewart](#)), another mutant of the same generation. They aren't enemies so much as ideological opposites. Magneto, having seen the Holocaust, has a deep pessimism about human nature. Xavier, who runs a school for mutants in Westchester County, where it doubtless seems no stranger than the other private schools, hopes these new powers can be used for good. [Bruce Davison](#) plays the McCarthy-like senator who waves a list of "known mutants" during a congressional hearing and wants them all registered--no doubt for dire purposes. Magneto wants to counter by using a device which can convert world leaders to mutants. (The world leaders are conveniently meeting on an island near Ellis Island, so the Statue of Liberty can be a prop.) How a machine could create a desired mutation within a generation is not much explored by the movie, which also eludes the question of why you would want to invest your enemies with your powers. No matter; Xavier, who can read minds, leads his good mutants in a battle to foil Magneto, and that's the plot, or most of it.

"X-Men" is arguably heavy on mutants; they have a way of coming onstage, doing their tricks and disappearing. The leads are Wolverine ([Hugh Jackman](#)), whose fists sprout deadly blades; Cyclops ([James Marsden](#)), who wears a wraparound visor to control and aim his laserlike eyes; the prosaically named Dr. Jean Grey ([Famke Janssen](#)), who can move objects with her mind; Storm ([Halle Berry](#) in a platinum wig), who can control the weather, and Rogue ([Anna Paquin](#)), a teenager who is new to this stuff. I can't help wondering how a guy whose knuckles turn into switchblades gets to be the top-ranking superhero **SUBTILITEIT**. If Storm can control, say, a tropical storm, she's obviously the most powerful, even if her feats here are limited to local climate control.

Magneto's team is not as colorful as the good guys, and includes Mystique ([Rebecca Romijn-Stamos](#)), who in the Japanese anime tradition can change her shape (as her costume tries to keep up), and Toad ([Ray Park](#)), who has a tongue that can whip out to great distances. Why it is that Xavier's team has impressive skills, while Magneto's team has specialties that would prove invaluable to a stripper? I started out liking this movie, while waiting for something really interesting to happen. When nothing did, I still didn't dislike it **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**; I assume the X-Men will further develop their personalities if there is a sequel, and maybe find time to get involved in a story. No doubt fans of the comics will understand subtle allusions and fine points of behavior; they should linger in the lobby after each screening to answer questions.

5 Offline Reviews: Spiderman

Review 1:

Caught in a web: **Weak plot** **COMPLEXITEIT**, passive hero keep 'Spider-Man' earthbound

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
San Fransisco Chronicle

Friday, May 3, 2002

Blockbuster season 2002 begins today with "Spider-Man," based on the Marvel Comics series about a melancholy superhero who can climb buildings, throw webs from his fingertips and swing through cities. He's got the superhero part down. **CONTEXT CBA**

The movie, directed by Sam Raimi **REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD**, has the opposite problem. It's a serviceable adaptation with some inspired casting in the choice of Tobey Maguire in the title role and Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane, the hero's romantic obsession. **The human side of the story works well -- clearly lots of thought and feeling went into developing it.** But the superhero part of the movie will leave audiences with a flat feeling **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**, thanks to computery-looking special effects **SUBTILITEIT** and a sagging story line.

The big advantage of Maguire is his naked sensitivity, which makes him instantly likable. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** He plays Peter Parker, a high school nerd in love with the girl next door, MJ, but he can't find the nerve to speak to her. In a sense, he's every young man until the fateful day when, on a class field trip, he is bitten by a genetically altered spider. Within hours, he is exhibiting the special powers that will turn him into a superhero.

The one scene in "Spider-Man" that can legitimately be called exhilarating **GEBRUIK HAT** is the one in which Peter realizes the extent of his powers. He climbs up the face of a building, then leaps from one rooftop to another. **The camera films much of this as seen through his eyes, so we experience that weak-in-the-knees feeling of being high up and looking down.** **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**

At this point in the story, Peter is all about the girl. He wants to make money using his new powers so he can buy a sports car and impress her. But circumstances keep intruding. His powers drag him into a life of stopping crime and helping the powerless. In this way, "Spider-Man" is like one of those dreams in which the dreamer wants to do something but is always blocked and can never get to it. These unconscious echoes may explain why the comic book has endured for the last 40 years.

Still, it's hard to make a movie about a passive hero. Peter is not only passive in his pursuit of MJ, but he's also largely reactive in his Spider-Man incarnation. If he sees a crime, he does something about it; otherwise trouble has to find him.

In the comic books, Spider-Man's melancholia is enlivened by a wise-guy quality, but David Koepp's screenplay eliminates that element, perhaps because, these days, smart-mouthed action heroes are the norm. **CONTEXT CBA** Unfortunately, what we get instead is a Spider-Man with no edge, who's just bland and fairly miserable. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Spider-Man is even reactive in his battle against the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), a homicidal maniac who rides through New York on a surfboard-like glider, shooting missiles and lobbing bombs, while laughing like a jackal. Their clash takes up most of the movie, but it's Dafoe, not Maguire, who dominates their scenes. The Goblin decides when to fight and how to fight, while Spider-Man can only play catch-up.

Their clash is disappointing in yet another way. When Spider-Man swings on vines of web matter, he looks like a little bouncing image on a computer screen. Likewise, the sight of the Green Goblin riding a glider looks like something out of a video game. Ten years ago, these scenes might have been something, but audiences today expect more.

Obviously, something is wrong with a movie called "Spider-Man" when the best part is the love story **COMPLEXITEIT**. Peter tells MJ that looking at her makes him feel as if he has "reached the unreachable," and Raimi is able to keep the camera right on Dunst -- somehow her face can sustain that. It's not that she's especially beautiful or talented, though she is good enough on both counts. It's an extra quality. Dunst is probably the first actress since Lauren Bacall to seem like a fully awake adult at 19 years old. It might be something in her essence, or it might be a trick of the camera. If it's a trick, it's some trick. **By the middle of "Spider-Man," the action scenes are dominating FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Peter doesn't want to fight, so the audience wishes he didn't have to, and the whole thing feels dispiriting. **At least the cinematography isn't dark and dank like that SUBTILITEIT of every other superhero movie since Tim Burton's "Batman." Raimi keeps it bright and bearable. VERGELIJKING FILMS – VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**

Review 2:
SPIDERMAN
Chicago Sun-Times

BY ROGER EBERT /
May 3, 2002

Imagine "Superman" with a Clark Kent more charismatic than the Man of Steel, and you'll understand how "Spider-Man" goes wrong. **Tobey Maguire is pitch-perfect as the socially retarded Peter Parker, but when he becomes Spider-Man, the film turns to action sequences that zip along like perfunctory cartoons. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Not even during Spidey's first experimental outings do we feel that flesh and blood are contending with gravity **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. Spidey soars too quickly through the skies of Manhattan; he's as convincing as Mighty Mouse. **SUBTILITEIT**

The appeal of the best sequences in the Superman and Batman movies is that they lend weight and importance to comic-book images **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Within the ground rules set by each movie, they even have plausibility. As a reader of the Spider-Man comics, I admired the vertiginous frames showing Spidey dangling from terrifying heights. He had the powers of a spider and the instincts of a human being, but the movie is split between a plausible Peter Parker and an inconsequential superhero. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

Consider a sequence early in the film, after Peter Parker is bitten by a mutant spider and discovers his new powers. His hand is sticky. He doesn't need glasses anymore. He was scrawny yesterday, but today he's got muscles. **The movie shows him becoming aware of these facts, but insufficiently amazed (or frightened) by them SUBTILITEIT**. He learns how to spin and toss webbing, and finds that he can make enormous leaps. And then there's a scene where he's like a kid with a new toy, jumping from one rooftop to another, making giant leaps, whooping with joy.

Remember the first time you saw the characters defy gravity in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"? They transcended gravity, but they didn't dismiss it; **VERGELIJKING FILMS** They seemed to possess weight, dimension and presence. Spider-Man as he leaps across the rooftops is landing too lightly, rebounding too much like a bouncing ball. He looks like a video game figure, not like a person having an amazing experience.

The other super-being in the movie is the Green Goblin, who surfs the skies in jet-shoes. He, too, looks like a drawing being moved quickly around a frame, instead of like a character

who has mastered a daring form of locomotion. He's handicapped, too, by his face, which looks like a high-tech action figure with a mouth that doesn't move. I understand why it's immobile (we're looking at a mask), but I'm not persuaded; the movie could simply ordain that the Green Goblin's exterior shell has a face that's mobile, and the character would become more interesting. **COMPLEXITEIT**. (True, Spider-Man has no mouth, and Peter Parker barely opens his--the words slip out through a reluctant slit.) The film tells Spidey's origin story--who Peter Parker is, who Aunt May ([Rosemary Harris](#)) and Uncle Ben ([Cliff Robertson](#)) are, how Peter's an outcast at school, how he burns with unrequited love for Mary Jane Watson ([Kirsten Dunst](#)), how he peddles photos of Spider-Man to cigar-chomping editor J. Jonah Jameson ([J.K. Simmons](#)).

Peter Parker was crucial in the evolution of Marvel comics because he was fallible and had recognizable human traits. **CONTEXT CBA**. He was a nerd, a loner, socially inept, insecure, a poor kid being raised by relatives. Maguire gets all of that just right, and I enjoyed the way Dunst is able to modulate her gradually increasing interest in this loser who begins to seem attractive to her. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. I also liked the complexity of the villain, who in his Dr. Jekyll manifestation is brilliant tycoon Norman Osborn ([Willem Dafoe](#)) and in his Mr. Hyde persona is a cackling psychopath. **COMPLEXITEIT** Osborn's son Harry ([James Franco](#)) is a rich kid, embarrassed by his dad's wealth, who is Peter's best and only friend, and Norman is affectionate toward Peter even while their alter-egos are deadly enemies. That works, and there's an effective scene where Osborn has a conversation with his invisible dark side.

The origin story is well told, and the characters will not disappoint anyone who values the original comic books. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**. It's in the action scenes that things fall apart. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Consider the scene where Spider-Man is given a cruel choice between saving Mary Jane or a cable car full of school kids. He tries to save both, so that everyone dangles from webbing that seems about to pull loose. The visuals here could have given an impression of the enormous weights and tensions involved, but instead the scene seems more like a bloodless storyboard of the idea. In other CGI scenes, Spidey swoops from great heights to street level and soars back up among the skyscrapers again with such dizzying speed that it seems less like a stunt than like a fast-forward version of a stunt. **SUBTILITEIT**

I have one question about the Peter Parker character: Does the movie go too far with his extreme social paralysis? Peter tells Mary Jane he just wants to be friends. "Only a friend?" she repeats. "That's all I have to give," he says. How so? Impotent? Spidey-sense has skewed his sexual instincts? Afraid his hands will get stuck?

Review 3: **FILM REVIEW; Muscles Ripple, Webs Unfurl, Hormones Race**

By A. O. SCOTT
New York Times
Published: May 3, 2002

THE first thing you see, after the house lights dim and before the credits begin, is a flurry of comic book panels accompanied by the Marvel logo. These inky, pulpy images are followed by the glossy, silvery letters of the title, and the contrast suggests that comic books and large-scale Hollywood blockbusters may not be as compatible as the movie studios would have us believe. Traditional comic books are cheap, stubbornly low-tech and sometimes slow moving.

For their part, the movies that lumber into the multiplexes every summer tend to be stratospherically expensive, loaded with the latest special effects and stuffed with ear-splitting and eye-straining action sequences designed to leave you glutted with sensation, if not always satisfied. **FILM ALS PRODUCT – NEGATIEVE KIJK POP CULTUUR**

"Spider-Man," which opens today nationwide, is, inevitably, all of these things, but the director, Sam Raimi, **REGISSEUR IS GENOEMD** and the screenwriter, David Koepp, have not lost track of the deeper, simpler satisfactions of superhero worship, chief among which is identification. The original Spider-Man, created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko for Marvel Comics in 1962, was not, under the costume, an interplanetary exile like Superman or a reclusive millionaire like Batman, but an ordinary, disaffected urban adolescent. As he swooped through the skyscraper canyons of New York (not Gotham City or Metropolis), the web slinger spun self-mocking, self-pitying soliloquies that mirrored the thoughts of his likely readers. Referring to himself as "your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man," he seemed aware of the absurdity inherent in being a freelance big-city crime fighter. **CONTEXT CBA**

This conceit has grown tired over the years, and Marvel's cachet as the hipper of the two comic book giants has long since waned. But the filmmakers have succeeded in rejuvenating the character while staying faithful to his roots. **ORIGINALITEIT**

They have been helped by the inspired casting of Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker, a high school senior from Woodhaven, Queens, who is bitten by a spider on a class field trip to Columbia University. (In 1962, the year of the Cuban missile crisis, the spider was radioactive. Now, to reflect more contemporary technological anxieties, it is a genetically altered superspecies.) **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

With his wide eyes and soft, mobile mouth, Mr. Maguire seems at once knowing and vulnerable; more than any other actor in his 20's, he embodies the generational trait of expressing irony and earnestness as if there were no difference between them **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. He sometimes appears too smart for his own good, observing his own performance with skeptical cool; but here this detachment is consistent with his character's predicament. Peter himself, after all, is something of an actor, forced to improvise a performance that is both dangerous and ridiculous.

The best part of "Spider-Man" comes between the spider bite and Peter's discovery of his calling, when the movie asks us to imagine what a retiring, middle-class teenager would do with superhuman powers. Admire his new muscles, for one thing, and then figure out how to impress Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst), the flame-haired beauty next door.

And so Peter, in a crude prototype of the Spidey costume (complete with red low-rise canvas sneakers), enters a wrestling competition, hoping to win enough money to buy a used sports car that will make Mary Jane take notice. Such childish indulgence is quickly put aside when

Peter's beloved Uncle Ben (Cliff Robertson) is killed in a carjacking, and the young man's new talents are turned to a higher purpose.

Meanwhile -- if I may borrow a time-honored comic book formulation -- an ambitious scientist named Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe) is undergoing a similar identity crisis. Osborn's company, which develops "human performance enhancement" applications for the military, is about to lose a big contract, so Osborn performs an experiment on himself and becomes the Green Goblin, flying through the city on a rocket-powered surfboard and wreaking all manner of havoc.

To complicate matters for our hero, Osborn's son, Harry (James Franco), is Peter's best friend and his rival for Mary Jane's affections. Soon Spider-Man and his nemesis are fighting it out in the skies while their alter egos negotiate their increasingly knotty emotional lives on the ground. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

Oddly enough, the ground-level action in "Spider-Man" is much more entertaining than the explosive, computer-enhanced acrobatics overhead, **most of which looks thin and unreal** **SUBTILITEIT**. (An exception is the climactic battle on the girders of the Queensboro Bridge, though part of the thrill comes from seeing this sturdy structure given a star turn after years of neglect in favor of its more photogenic siblings.)

When Spider-Man somersaults and ricochets amid the tall buildings, you are supposed to feel a rush of excitement, but instead you feel pushed out of the movie **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. Comic book panels, like old-fashioned movies, function by sleight of hand, suggesting more than they show. By allowing us to see continuous motion, the computer-generated images superimposed on real backgrounds diminish the magic rather than enhancing it. **SUBTILITEIT**

It's not that these effects look cheap. Quite the opposite: they look like a waste of money.

But if the scenes of fighting and flying don't add to the fun of "Spider-Man," they don't manage to spoil it either. Mr. Raimi is a master of pop realism, **unafraid of easy jokes and corny** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** sentiment and willing to give the actors room to find moments of offhand wit and genuine tenderness.

Mr. Robertson and Rosemary Harris, who plays Peter's kindly Aunt May, are modest and decent without descending into egregious saintliness. As J. Jonah Jameson, the volcanic newspaper editor (who also, in a worrisome breach of journalistic ethics, appears to be in charge of ad sales), J. K. Simmons explodes into the picture like a cartoon Edward G. Robinson, stealing all his scenes, of which there are too few. (One hopes there will be more in the sequel, scheduled for 2004.)

Mr. Dafoe is the exception to the rule that the villains in this kind of movie are generally more interesting than the heroes; his performance is uninspired and secondhand. His Green Goblin voice sounds like Phil Hartman doing a Jack Nicholson impression, and his hollowed-out face conveys not ravenous evil so much as deep fatigue. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

Fatigue is, more often than not, what one feels emerging from a movie like this, having been buffeted by hype and assaulted by commercial gimmickry. "Spider-Man," while hardly immune to these vices, is, like Mr. Maguire, disarmingly likable, and touching in unexpected ways ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. The last scene between Peter and Mary Jane, whose romance gives the movie an old-Hollywood ache, is like something out of a Henry James novel, if you can imagine a Henry James novel with lots of special effects and a sequel already in the works.

"Spider-Man" is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned). Some of the violence is bloodier and more intense than the usual comic-book fare.

Review 4:

Swing Time

Tobey Maguire offers up a compellingly human superhero in *Spider-Man*; Woody Allen thumbs his nose at Hollywood -- what else is new?

By Peter Rainer
New York Magazine
05-05-2002

Spider-Man is an odd duck. Despite all the computer-generated effects and highflying superhero theatrics, this roughly \$120 million movie is FILM ALS PRODUCT, with few exceptions, remarkable only in its small human touches. Tobey Maguire plays the resonantly nerdy Peter Parker, who is bitten by a genetically mutated spider during a high-school field trip and acquires arachnidlike powers: Newly buff, no longer needing to wear specs, he discovers he can spin webs and scale buildings. Peter's initial awe and distrust for what he has become are compelling and funny HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID; his grand-scale spidery exploits, as they play themselves out in the second half of the movie, feel fairly standard ORIGINALITEIT, lacking even the graphic charge of the *Marvel Spider-Man* comic books. SUBTILITEIT

Stan Lee -- who, with Steve Ditko, first came up with the idea for Spidey in *Amazing Fantasy* in 1962 -- is credited as an executive producer of the movie, and yet the lore and the look of the film seem derived not so much from the *Spider-Man* comics as they do from other superhero movies, especially the *Superman* series. CONTEXT CBA Sam Raimi REGISSEUR, who began his career making low-budget horror schlock and graduated to bigger and blander fare, is reputedly a *Spider-Man* aficionado, but instead of pulling out the stops, he allows a dull conformity to settle in. He's doing here pretty much what Chris Columbus did to *Harry Potter*; he's protecting the franchise by keeping everything as palatable as possible. VERGELIJKING FILMS – VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS

For a while, at least, the mundaneness of the enterprise is somewhat refreshing, compared with, say, the camp grotesqueries of the last few *Batman* flicks, which just about turned me off to superhero movies forever. VERGELIJKING FILMS Maguire is well-chosen to play a kid with a dual existence: In his earlier movies, such as *The Ice Storm*, he often appeared rather blankly indrawn, but his reticence here has emotional levels; his character seems genuinely conflicted about using his powers. And Maguire works well with Kirsten Dunst, who plays redheaded Mary Jane Watson, his schoolmate and neighbor in the middle-class Queens neighborhood where he lives with his super-nice aunt May (Rosemary Harris) and uncle Ben (Cliff Robertson). Maguire and Dunst take their sweet time in their scenes together, puzzling out the feelings their characters have about each other FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. The coy, lovestruck reticence of Peter and Mary Jane, along with their occasional bursts of brashness, will probably mean a lot more to the film's core young-adult audience than all these supersonic spiderwebs. The couple share the film's best moment: After rescuing Mary Jane from a gang of thugs, Peter, as Spider-Man, hangs upside down in the rain in a dark alleyway and allows himself to be kissed by her, his face mask pulled down just enough to facilitate the smooch.

Raimi presents a New York that is only slightly stylized, and the plainness helps to set off the superheroes, not only Spider-Man but his arch enemy, the Green Goblin, played by Willem Dafoe. An armor-plated horror with a gargoyle face who zips around in a metallic glider outfitted with munitions, the Goblin has his own double life as corporate arms manufacturer and mad scientist Norman Osborn. (Dafoe seems scarier, and more goblinlike, when he's not hidden behind a mask.) The big battle between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin takes place at a World Unity Festival in Times Square, and it's a pity we don't get to see more than a snippet of Macy Gray performing "My Nutmeg Phantasy." If the filmmakers had any humor, they would have set Gray against the Goblin -- she's already flying high.

One aspect of *Spider-Man* may inadvertently move audiences. The film was conceived, of course, pre-September 11, and originally, before the scene was excised, Spidey had an encounter at the World Trade Center. VOORSPELLING REACTIE – CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK I wish they had kept that material in, but even so, the film seems imprinted with its loss. As a movie location, New York isn't used particularly well in *Spider-Man*, and the scenes of the superhero whizzing up and around the skylines are too blurred and frenetic. And yet, there's a kind of poetic fulfillment for audiences in being able to soar fancy free above the city POSITIEF/NEGATIEF. For those who have felt confined by fear, it's an immensely satisfying flying dream. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 5: Spider-Man' cast spins web of thrills, intrigue

By Mike Clark, USA TODAY

03-05-2002

With a comic-book protagonist who can land the leap, weave the web but also brood with the best, the superbly cast *Spider-Man* begins with one of the most stirring opening-credits sequences ever. But it ends in a way that reflects its hero's split personality: a melancholic exchange between young smitten leads, which *Dark Man*'s Sam Raimi REGISSEUR (a keen directorial choice) even backs with tombstones. Boasting casting prowess to rival 1978's opening *Superman* salvo with Christopher Reeve, this Marvel marvel looks at another roving rescuer whose more mundane "self" isn't at ease with a hero's mission VERGELIJKING FILMS. He is the brilliant but socially maladroit high schooler Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire), bitten to torso-enhancing extremes by a genetically altered spider during a museum field trip.

Also on the outing is popular Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst), a literal "girl next door" whose alcoholic father verbally abuses her. Even without his new powers, the oddly disinclined Peter probably could flag her attention away from his better-looking and less-studious buddy (James Franco, who earned *his* brooding stripes as James Dean on a TNT biopic). But he has webs to spin.

And just to show that this is the rare cartoon adaptation in which every lead can be dysfunctional, check out Willem Dafoe as Franco's corporate-scientist pop. Transformed during a lab catastrophe into a marauding terror (Green Goblin), he, too, has a dual personality even more in conflict with itself.

Somehow through all this, the movie has a rapidly beating heart, though two hours of near-constant frenzy may find you as winded as both adversaries by the end. You want thrills? The itinerant Spider-Man annihilates a burly pro wrestler for money in a stylish early scene and later bounces like a pinball from skyscraper to skyscraper rescuing victims (often the Goblin's) after hitting his career stride. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

Production design? By imaginatively scrambling New York sites into something that *almost* looks like the city, it deserves an Oscar nomination **SUBTILITEIT**. The supporting cast (Cliff Robertson, Rosemary Harris, J.K. Simmons) is as perfect as the leads, and there's even a truly seductive Maguire-Dunst kiss that will easily make the cut if the American Film Institute ever picks history's hundred best.

The movie's limitations are mostly built-in: Here's one more big-screen comic book when comic books are what we now get at the movies every summer, regardless of their subject. But you know a movie has succeeded when you're looking toward the sequel that *Spider-Man's* wrap-up strongly portends. This is a rare twisted crowd-pleaser for longtime fans as well as novices — or for those that don't know an arachnid from an insect.

5 offline reviews: Fantastic Four

Review 1:

Four on the floor

By BRUCE WESTBROOK Copyright 2005 Houston Chronicle

July 11, 2005, 2:30PM

Though Fantastic Four is Marvel Comics' oldest title, it's less well-known than Amazing Spider-Man or Uncanny X-Men, so its first film had some explaining to do.

Fantastic Four explains, all right. It's an origin film to a fault, so stuck in setup mode that it makes Batman Begins look like a career-spanning saga. VERGELIJKING FILMS

Though FF serves to introduce the team — a dysfunctional extended family who gain powers in a space accident and become uniformed do-gooders — it rarely serves the cosmic grandeur or rock 'em, sock 'em action of the comic books. CONTEXT CBA

The idea was to launch FF's film franchise with family-friendly adventurous fun. Humor ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE, not action, is why Tim Story REGISSEUR (Barbershop, Taxi) was hired to direct, which may account for the clumsiness of some action scenes.

But screenwriters Mark Frost (Twin Peaks) and Michael France (Hulk) also are to blame. They're so busy setting up the premise that they barely get around to exploiting it.

The cast also is charisma-challenged, an exception being Chris Evans as Johnny Storm, aka the Human Torch. His cockiness, modernity and light-hearted revels in flames and fame quicken the dawdling exposition. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

But Ioan Gruffudd is blandness incarnate as scientist Reed Richards, aka the elastic Mr. Fantastic, and Jessica Alba is stuck carrying a confounding torch for him as Sue Storm, aka the Invisible Woman.

The Shield's Michael Chiklis isn't much more riveting as test pilot Ben Grimm, but he has moments after morphing into rocklike strongman the Thing.

Forget computer effects. Like Ron Perlman in Hellboy, Chiklis wears a craggy (and heavy, at 60 pounds) costume. SUBTILITEIT In action terms, it's a mixed bag, but with his eyes as a window to his soul, Chiklis can play humor, as the Torch's whipping boy, and pathos, as a beast with no chance for beauty. Ditched by his fair-weather fiancée, the monstrous Thing only wants to be normal again.

But wait — this isn't about the Thing needing a bouquet of flowers from his Aunt Petunia. It's a superhero film, for Galactus' sake, and too often it coughs, sputters or bogs down in blather at the Baxter Building, the FF's Manhattan headquarters. SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT

What superhero flicks need is a strong villain, and FF lacks one, even though it takes the biggest baddie from FF comics: Victor Von Doom, aka Dr. Doom.

As a scheming billionaire and longtime rival of Richards, Julian McMahon as Doom is almost as dully generic as Gruffudd ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. Fans also may balk at how his origin is twisted into the FF's fate. VOORSPELLING REACTIE

In the comics, Doom had no superpowers. Here, he does, after suffering the same blast of cosmic rays as the foursome while on a space mission.

His powers aren't clear — something metallic, like a poor man's Magneto — and Doom abuses them like a petulant child. There's hardly a hint of his status as imperious ruler of faux European nation Latveria.

Doom could have been a timely modern-day despot harboring weapons of mass destruction. Instead, he's just a corporate cad who loses his head, witlessly attacking the FF when he should be shoring up his collapsing empire.

Plotwise, that's about it. We see the FF evolve as a team and get one big fracas with Doom. But after clobberin' time, the movie abruptly ends. COMPLEXITEIT

Loyalists, at least, can savor some nice touches. Kerry Washington's few scenes as blind Alicia Masters, who befriends the Thing, are warm and welcome and may set up the evil Puppet Master (Alicia's father) if there's a sequel. ONTROERING Writer Stan Lee, who created FF with artist Jack Kirby in 1961, has a cameo as a postman from the comics, this time lugging bills instead of fan mail.

Such moments are sweet, but they won't be enough to elevate this to the rarefied status of Spider-Man or X-Men flicks. While Marvel still bills FF as "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine," on screen, at least, it's not so fantastic. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

Review 2:

She throws force fields. The others fly, turn rubbery and become rocklike. Fantastic? What else do they do?

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
San Francisco Chronicle

Friday, July 8, 2005

The wretched business for this week is "Fantastic Four," an action fantasy based on a Marvel comic book series. It's about four people who are zapped by radiation but, alas, don't die. Instead, they take on special powers that the filmmakers are incapable of making interesting, partly because the characters are ciphers, and partly because the story is listless and uninventive. **ORIGINALITEIT**

If there was ever any doubt that action scenes depend more on context than flash, "Fantastic Four" proves it. It has flash and dazzle to spare. Clearly, a lot went into making it visually plausible that Ioan Gruffudd can stretch and elongate his body into amazing lengths and contortions, and that Jessica Alba can make herself invisible. **SUBTILITEIT**. But nothing went into providing opportunities for the characters to use their powers in crucial, creative ways that might have mattered to a paying audience. Here, when the quartet's powers are put to use, it's almost invariably to get themselves out of the scrapes their powers have caused.

In fact, for superheroes, they're of little use to the public, so it's a surprise when they're rather arbitrarily dubbed the Fantastic Four. From a civic perspective, they're more like fantastic nuisances or fantastic menaces. It's mystifying that they're not incarcerated in radiation-resistant cells -- and something of a surprise that they're not forced to escape from those cells, to become outlaws, enemies of the people they were trying to help. Imagine them, dangerous misanthropes, the bane of mankind, insular, getting stronger and stranger by the day. ... That's just the beginning of a dramatic idea, but it's more than anything the movie has going for it.

Adapting a comic book series is a little like adapting a sitcom. The writers are hemmed in on one side by the need not to alienate people familiar with the series, and they're hemmed in on the other side by the material itself, which, by design, can never come to a definitive resolution. **CONTEXT CBA**. Sometimes an adaptation can succeed anyway, as in the case of the "Spider-Man" series. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. But more often the writers are left gasping, like fish in a basket, and the actors are left exposed, investing fake emotion in fake material.

Gruffudd plays Reed, a scientist who seeks out an old college acquaintance, Victor Von Doom (Julian McMahon), to get funding for a space mission. Reed wants to do something that will unlock the secrets of the genome, cure disease and bring about a paradise on earth. Strange then, that he should seek the backing of a snide, unpleasant person named Von Doom, but that's how it goes sometimes: The Von Dooms have all the money.

A mission is put together. Reed, his best buddy, Ben (Michael Chiklis); his ex-girlfriend, Sue Storm (Alba); and Sue's impetuous younger brother, Johnny Storm (Chris Evans). Along with Von Doom, they're in space for about three or four minutes when a cosmic ray knocks them all for a loop. After they regain consciousness, they each gradually discover that they've become endowed with special powers.

Reed has become rubbery. Johnny has become a human torch, capable of producing fire and flying through the air. In addition to making herself invisible, Sue can throw a force field at will. And Ben, who seems to have no new talent at first, soon undergoes the most flamboyant transformation: He becomes a monstrous, rocklike entity known as the Thing, who has superhuman strength and skin that looks like tree bark.

That's just the beginning, and from there, we might reasonably expect a series of glorious adventures for these individuals. But most of "Fantastic Four" is taken up with the gang holed up in the laboratory, waiting for Reed to find a means of reversing the effects of the ray. It's numbing, and so are the scenes of Von Doom dealing with his own cosmic transformations. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE To liven things up and bring in some human feeling, "Fantastic Four" attempts to generate interest in the once and future romance of Reed and Sue, but that plot line is perfunctory and uninvolved. GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE

It doesn't help that Alba has trouble being convincing on camera. She is very pretty. She can smile and do something with her eyes in a way that lights up the frame. But if she has to say more than a few words, she's on shaky ground, and when she's called upon to say more than a sentence, the strain is unmistakable. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

It would be easy to blame Alba's difficulties on the material and the director, Tim Story REGISSEUR, except that the other actors survive, and that Chiklis, as the Thing, actually manages a performance. He has the facade of a monster, but the eyes and voice of a man. In a better film, he'd be a poignant figure. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

Review 3:

'Fantastic': The Powers To Charm

By Stephen Hunter

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, July 8, 2005

Bicker, bicker, bicker, that's all they do.

Like any dysfunctional family -- wouldn't that be any family, really? -- the Fantastic Four snipe and carp and huff and puff and pout and mope and wheeze and sigh, when they're not attacking each other directly.

And that's the charm of "Fantastic Four," a funky, fun film version of the famous Marvel superhero concoction, one of the earliest of the revisionist wave of supes and in some ways the most lovable or at least the most knowable. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE Unlike Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, against whom in some form they were a reaction, they weren't idealized. VERGELIJKING FILMS. No square-jawed ubermensch with zero ego and id and muscles like weisswurst. Instead, they were reluctant superheroes who, when you came down to it, weren't that super. Their powers were kind of strange. Mostly what they did was try and get along, even if getting along wasn't any easier for them than for the rest of us. They were the least super of superheroes. They were the superheroes next door and you could hear their shouts coming through the wall.

Tim Story's "Fantastic Four" REGISSEUR features exactly that sense of squabble and snippityness as it produces a great deal of comic energy in a movie more based on character than plot. CONTEXT CBA. It finally does get a little plot at the end, but not much of one. COMPLEXITEIT. You have to say, gee, there was so much plot left over after "Batman Begins," maybe they could have borrowed a little. Could we have a couple of nice inciting incidents, please.

maybe a motive or two, even a caper or a mission? Nope: That's not "FF."
ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

The movie, therefore, is mostly an origins tale. It tells how four more or less (actually a lot more less than more) "normal" people became, you know, whatever, I'm not sure what. I guess the word would be, uh, "different." The weird ambivalence toward the superheroic -- gee, it's a great way to meet chicks and get tables, but you can't go to the 7-Eleven for a Slurpee without massive agonies -- that runs through the characters and the story is one of the movie's most lovable qualities.

Anyhow, it all begins with superbillionaire Victor Von Doom, played by a square-jawed block of granite named Julian McMahon, who sees in DNA research yet more billions. Acting on the theories of square-jawed block of limestone Reed Richards (Welshman loan Gruffudd, a former Brit TV Horatio Hornblower), he decides to send a ship into space to examine a cloud of . . . I'm not sure what: energy? debris? magic rays? movie special effects? . . . which may have started life on Earth the last time it blew through the neighborhood 5 billion years ago. He puts together a team, or rather he has the brilliant but self-doubting Dr. Richards put it together: Reed's old girlfriend (and Victor's current one) Sue Storm (Jessica Alba), Brooklyn astronaut Ben Grimm (Michael Chiklis) and Sue's brother, madcap flyboy and race driver Johnny Storm (Chris Evans). All head out to space, where the cloud suddenly accelerates, catches them unshielded and bathes them in . . . a severe dosage of movie special effects.
FOCUS SPEKTAKEL

They make it back to Earth but now they're kind of different.

Dr. Richards now knows how to stretch a point, bend an argument, slip out the back, Jack. He's elastic.

Sue, also a scientist even behind Alba's pouty, sultry, pillowy, not-a-chance-Fido face, now can turn invisible. She also has some kind of bonus deal going, a "force" of some sort that can stop or contain other forces.

Johnny Storm can now burst into flame. But he doesn't burn. No, I don't quite see the point of this one either. Reed at least could stick a hand under a door and steal loose change. Sue could get into the New York Giants' locker room, every American girl's dream. But what can Johnny do, exactly? Oh, toast marshmallows *anywhere, anytime* ! That's a great super talent.

Evans is the most negligible of the FF; he resembles one of those ESPN or Fox sports talk-show guys; 28, too old to be cute anymore, too much attitude, not enough knowledge, not nearly as interesting as he thinks he is.

As for poor Ben, he's at the same time the most super-sized and the most cursed: He turns into the Hulk. No wait, the Hulk is green. He's brown. I don't think marketing would approve "The Hulk only brown" as a title, so he goes by the moniker "The Thing." It's not fair, of course, because he remains entirely human even if he now weighs 600 pounds and has a complexion that looks like the floor of the Mojave.

Actually, of the various illusions the movie deploys, the Thing is the least satisfactory. It's just a costume. Like, big deal. It's also a bad costume: It's so thick and unyielding, so un-nuanced and unsupple, it could be tin foil. Chiklis can use none of his talents as an actor except voice and eyes, neither of which are particularly well developed. Somehow you never believe in him; you just think, gee, that's John Belushi caked in mud. What's he doing here?

The climax of the film comes about the three-quarters mark, which is the first time the FF work together as a team and recognize how useful their somewhat weird package of skills can be.

This is also the movie's single best sequence, a kind of accident-prevention action on one of New York's many bridges, which involves a lot of well-crafted legerdemain, the upshot of which is that nobody falls into the river below and the Thing single-handedly pulls an errant fire engine and several clinging firefighters back from the edge. **SUBTILITEIT**

Then, finally, the "story" begins. It seems to turn on the fact that Von Doom also has been zapped by the cloud. He's turning metal. He's in a bad mood because his vast business is on the skids after the fiasco of the cloud mission. So he decides to kill the FF.

Not much, is it? No plot against the world, no plan to extort the Fort Knox supply of gold out of Army hands or bio-attack Manhattan or kidnap Paris Hilton **COMPLEXITEIT**. He just wants to mess with our pals, who by this time have set up a communal barracks in an art moderne skyscraper. The movie shunts through this ploy rather perfunctorily, leaving the unfortunate residue that the last 20 minutes are the movie's worst. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

Review 4:

Fantastic Four

BY ROGER EBERT / July 8, 2005
Chicago Sun-times

So you get in a spaceship, and you venture into orbit to research a mysterious star storm hurtling toward Earth. There's a theory it may involve properties of use to man. The spaceship is equipped with a shield to protect its passengers from harmful effects, but the storm arrives ahead of schedule and saturates everybody on board with unexplained but powerful energy that creates radical molecular changes in their bodies.

They return safely to Earth, only to discover that Reed Richards ([loan Gruffudd](#)), the leader of the group, has a body that can take any form or stretch to unimaginable lengths. Call him Mr. Fantastic. Ben Grimm ([Michael Chiklis](#)) develops superhuman powers in a vast and bulky body that seems made of stone. Call him the Thing. Sue Storm (Jessica Alba) can become invisible at will and generate force fields that can contain propane explosions, in case you have a propane explosion that needs containing but want the option of being invisible. Call her Invisible Woman. And her brother Johnny Storm ([Chris Evans](#)) has a body that can burn at supernova temperatures. Call him the Human Torch.

I almost forgot the villain, Victor Von Doom (Julian McMahon), who becomes Dr. Doom and wants to use the properties of the star storm and the powers of the Fantastic Four for his own purposes. He eventually becomes metallic.

By this point in the review, are you growing a little restless? What am I gonna do, list names and actors and superpowers and nicknames forever? That's how the movie feels.

It's all setup and demonstration, and naming and discussing and demonstrating, and it never digests the complications of the Fantastic Four and gets on to telling a compelling story **COMPLEXITEIT**. Sure, there's a nice sequence where the Thing keeps a fire truck from falling off a bridge, but you see one fire truck saved from falling off a bridge, you've seen them all.

The Fantastic Four are, in short, underwhelming **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. The edges kind of blur between them and other superhero teams. That's understandable. How many people could pass a test right now on who the X-Men are and what *their* powers are? Or would want to? I wasn't watching "[Fantastic Four](#)" to study it, but to be entertained by it, **but how could I be amazed by a movie that makes its own characters so indifferent about themselves?** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

The Human Torch, to repeat, can burn at supernova temperatures! He can become so hot, indeed, that he could threaten the very existence of the Earth itself! This is absolutely stupendously amazing, wouldn't you agree? If you could burn at supernova temperatures, would you be able to stop talking about it? I know people who won't shut up about winning 50 bucks in the lottery. **SUBTILITEIT.**

But after Johnny Storm finds out he has become the Human Torch, he takes it pretty much in stride, showing off a little by setting his thumb on fire. Later he saves the Earth, while Invisible Woman simultaneously contains his supernova so he doesn't destroy it. That means Invisible Woman could maybe create a force field to contain the sun, which would be a big deal, but she's too distracted to explore the possibilities; she gets uptight because she will have to be naked to be invisible, because otherwise people could see her empty clothes; it is no consolation to her that invisible nudity is more of a metaphysical concept than a condition. **SUBTILITEIT - COMPLEXITEIT**

Are these people complete idiots? The entire nature of their existence has radically changed, and they're about as excited as if they got a makeover on "Oprah **SUBTILITEIT.**" The exception is Ben Grimm, as the Thing, who gets depressed when he looks in the mirror. Unlike the others, who look normal except when actually exhibiting superpowers, he looks like - well, he looks like his suits would fit The Hulk, just as the Human Torch looks like The Flash, and the Invisible Woman reminds me of Storm in "X-Men." **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Is this the road company? Thing clomps around on his Size 18 boulders and feels like an outcast until he meets a blind woman named Alicia (Kerry Washington) who loves him, in part because she can't see him. But the Thing looks like Don Rickles crossed with Mt. Rushmore; he has a body that feels like a driveway and a face with crevices you could hide a toothbrush in. Alicia tenderly feels his face with her fingers, like blind people often do while falling in love in the movies, and I guess she likes what she feels. Maybe she's extrapolating.

The story involves Dr. Doom's plot to ... but perhaps we need not concern ourselves with the plot of the movie, since it is undermined at every moment by the unwieldy need to involve a screenful of characters, who, despite the most astonishing powers, have not been made exciting or even interesting. **The X-Men are major league compared to them. VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Review 5: Even Comic-Book Superheroes Can Use a Little More Momentum

New York Times
By A. O. SCOTT
Published: July 8, 2005

If you like your special effects- driven summer action blockbusters slick, seamless and state of the art, then "Fantastic Four" may not be for you. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE – FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** While the superpowers and their consequences - flames, stretchy limbs, force fields and so on - no doubt required a great deal of money and expertise to bring to the screen, they look cheap and cheesy. **SUBTILITEIT** Which may be the point. In an era when movies based on comic books have become increasingly solemn and serious, this one is content to be trashy **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT.** Compared with the psychological probing and spiritual brooding of "Batman Begins." "Fantastic Four" is proudly dumb, loud and inconsequential. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** It is not an allegory, an archetypal tale of good and evil, or the cinematic equivalent of a graphic novel. It's a comic book. **CONTEXT CBA**

And a venerable one at that, since it was the Four, back in 1961, who helped to put Marvel Comics on the map, making the world safe for Spiderman, the Hulk, the X-Men and the whole Marvel stable of introspective genetic anomalies **CONTEXT CBA**. The group's movie debut is a standard origin story, in which the characters acquire and master their powers and confront their nemesis, one Dr. Doom. With its clumsy rhythms and indifferent acting, the movie, directed by Tim Story **REGISSEUR** ("[Barbershop](#)") from a script by Mark Frost and Michael France, is more like a television pilot than a big-screen epic, and its sequels would probably play best in half-hour increments on Saturday morning.

These days, though, television is probably too smart for a lowest-common-denominator product like "Fantastic Four," **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR** which is fantastic only in its commitment to mediocrity. If the filmmakers are trying for a spoofy, light-hearted tone, they succeed only to the point of making the picture unintentionally funny **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. When Jessica Alba first appears on screen, introduced as Sue Storm, an M.I.T.-trained scientist who specializes in genetic research, the audience may snicker. But really, Ms. Alba - who has certainly made the most of her own genetic advantages - is no more laughable in such a role than Ioan Gruffudd, who does his best to achieve the emotional depth and physical grace of a plastic action figure. Mr. Gruffudd plays Reed Richards, a genius who has lost the financing for his pet project, which involves both space travel and DNA sequencing. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Reed and Sue are former college sweethearts, but she is now involved with (and employed by) Victor Von Doom (Julian McMahon), a megalomaniacal tycoon who agrees to finance Reed's research. The three of them, along with Reed's pal Ben Grimm ([Michael Chiklis](#)) and Sue's reckless brother, Johnny (Chris Evans), spend a few moments on Victor's space station shouting nonsensical jargon until a radioactive storm cuts the mission short. Back on Earth, they discover some unusual side effects. Reed's hair turns silver at the temples, and the rest of his body takes on the qualities of a rubber band; Johnny, on a snowboard run that is the film's best and most gratuitous action sequence **SUBTILITEIT – GEBRUIK HAT**, bursts into flame; Ben acquires Herculean strength and grows a stony carapace that sends his fiancée running in the other direction. (Later, she shows up on the Brooklyn Bridge, where the Four have made their daring-rescue debut, to return Ben's engagement ring. Luckily, a friendly blind woman, played by Kerry Washington, soon sees the appeal of a big, stony, four-fingered guy in a raincoat and baggy pants).

Sue, for her part, is able to make herself invisible, and to generate powerful protective force fields, gifts that might serve Ms. Alba well in real life. Oddly enough, once the process of superpower acquisition is complete, very little remains for the superheroes, or the movie, to do. Ben - also known as The Thing - is the only one who suffers the kind of identity crisis that sometimes haunts sensitive superheroes, and Mr. Chiklis, under 60 pounds of latex, gives the most affecting performance in the movie. **COMPELXITEIT** The others read their lines and stand around waiting for the special effects to kick in, and for the villain to work out his identity crisis

and drop the "Von" from his name. Apparently, Spiderman has already taken care of street crime, and the only non-Doom-related do-gooding to be done is a bit of suicide-prevention, which leads to further rescue opportunities. After that, the only thing left is to look at your watch and count the minutes until the sequel, or the next comic-book blockbuster.

5 Offline Reviews: Sin City

Review 1:

Life in the big sleazy city comes alive in all colors

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
San Francisco Chronicle

Friday, April 1, 2005

"Sin City" is a film noir **GEBRUIK HAT** about a crime-filled city and the people who inhabit it, **but** it's also a movie unlike any other **ORIGINALITEIT**. The film uses a combination of live action, performed by real actors, and computer graphics to transform **Frank Miller's graphic novels into moving pictures**. **CONTEXT CBA** To remember "Sin City" hours later is to remember from a different part of the brain that remembers conventional movies. It's to remember a comic book come to life.

Just technically speaking, it's a remarkable achievement. **Robert Rodriguez and Miller (who shared directing duties) REGISSEUR** set out to do something different and have succeeded in creating a complete other world that's seamless and beautiful **SUBTILITEIT**. **They've not only mastered the technology but have used it with artistry**. **GEBRUIK HAT** Most frames in "Sin City" are in black and white, with splashes of vibrant color -- the red of a woman's lipstick, the sickly yellow of a eunuch's complexion. Sometimes a woman is entirely in color, and the man is in black and white. In one shot, a woman takes two steps toward the camera and turns from color to black and white as if stepping into shadows. **All these moments have a psychological reverberation -- they say something, paint a mood or instill a feeling**. **COMPLEXITEIT**

The performances are in keeping with the visuals, big but controlled. They match the heightened world of the comic book, without spoofing it or commenting on it. For Mickey Rourke, "Sin City" is practically a homecoming. **Here's an actor who has seemed a bit strange in any cinematic setting for at least 10 years. But in this comic book context of outsized villains and heroes, everything grand-scale and skewed about Rourke as a screen presence becomes a virtue. It's not enough to say that Rourke is good in "Sin City." It really feels like he lives there.** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT**

Rourke stars in the longest of the loosely connected stories that make up the film. Wearing prosthetics that give him an overhanging brow and a jutting chin, he plays Marv, a big ugly bruiser who brings home a pretty girl named Goldie (Jaime King) and wakes up in the morning to find out that she's been killed. Realizing he's about to get framed, he escapes and sets out to find her killer, pounding, smashing and slaughtering everything that gets in his way. **Rourke is lots of fun ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** -- confident and bizarre and with a strange imperviousness, as though not occupying the same reality as everyone else. Marv is described at one point as a man out of some earlier, more brutal century. That's how Rourke plays him, as an almost completely instinctive man.

"Sin City" also provides an invigorating showcase for Bruce Willis, as an old cop, Hartigan, who is to retire because of a heart condition. Of course, his last case turns out to be his biggest, one involving a child murderer (Nick Stahl) who also happens to be the son of a senator.

"Sin City" could be criticized as old stuff. The noir world it presents is derivative of 1940s film, **and it bears a family resemblance to other postmodern fantasy noirs, such as "Dark City" and "The Crow."** **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST** Like film noir, it can also be accused of misogyny. Women are slain with abandon -- though so are men -- and the one vision of female strength the movie offers is that of the prostitute. In one segment, a fugitive (Clive Owen) and a thug (Benicio Del Toro) have a fight that spills over into "Old Town," a part of the city ruled by a

merry prostitute band. The other female characters are pretty much victims of men: Brittany Murphy plays a barmaid with a nice raunchy resiliency,

and Jessica Alba, though she has trouble acting the role of a nightclub dancer, looks great in black-and-white.

Part of me wants to resist "Sin City," because it's art based on art that's based on art **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST** -- that is, a movie based on a comic book based on a film genre -- and, like anything three stages removed from inspiration, it has nothing to say. It's a style piece, a fever dream about film noir, and that hardly seems ambitious or important. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Yet if the movie's aims aren't lofty, its entertainment value is high and consistent **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. Virtually every moment of "Sin City" engages the mind and the eye. The energy never flags; the story never stalls. It starts in motion, and ends in motion. To make a movie this entertaining is to accomplish a small miracle.

Review 2:

SIN CITY

By ERIC HARRISON Copyright 2005 Houston Chronicle

May 27, 2005, 11:07AM

Sin City is the perfect comic book movie — immature, sexy, relentlessly violent, visually stunning **SUBTILITEIT** and bursting with attitude, every shot and utterance designed to knock our socks off. (Socks flew so furiously at the screening I attended, I still don't know whose stockings I wore home.)

Based on Frank Miller's comic books of the same name, the movie intertwines three hardboiled tales of brutality, love, sex and corruption, all linked by a common setting. **CONTEXT CBA** It's an amazing movie, this year's never-before-seen wonder, and — like another recent one, *Kill Bill* — all you're left with when it's over is the woozy, winded thrill of having seen it. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Even with all its violence and sordidness, you want to watch it again to marvel at its beauty, to soak up its tough talk, to figure out how on earth they got those effects **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** — but most of all to hold on to the fast-fading sensation.

So closely does *Sin City* approximate the look and feel of Miller's work that it is like a comic book come to life. **SUBTILITEIT** And, for the record, "comic book" far better suits Miller's *Sin City* books than the more highfalutin "graphic novel."

With their over-the-top violence — beheadings, castration, cannibalism, torture, pedophilia — they revel in blunt, pulp disposability. The dialogue and narration are like intentional parodies of Raymond Chandler novels. The anti-heroes don't have superpowers, exactly, but they survive things you and I couldn't. One character in particular — played by Mickey Rourke — has powers approaching Spider-Man's. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

All three tales are set in Basin City, in a world populated by hit men, hookers and crooked cops. In one, a hulking loser (Rourke) bucks the political and religious establishment to track down a prostitute's killer. In another, an aging police detective (Bruce Willis) risks his life to save a child from a murdering rapist. In the third, a mysterious figure (Clive Owen) joins a tough gang of hookers in a fight to keep pimps and corrupt police from muscling in on self-policed territory.

The movie is shot in gorgeous black and white but — like the comic — with color inserted to striking effect. A man lights a woman's cigarette, and in the flickering flame we see that her eyes are green, like her low-cut dress. A jaundiced character gets pummeled; his splattering blood is as yellow as his skin.

In one scene, two characters stand on a rooftop, the skyline silhouetted behind them. Suddenly the image morphs, and we're looking at a comic-book panel — the figures are white shapes moving before a two-dimensional drawing.

The film is filled with familiar actors — Benicio Del Toro, Elijah Wood, Brittany Murphy, Josh Hartnett and Rosario Dawson are among other stars — but layers of makeup make some unrecognizable. Rourke's character is so much like a comic-book creation that it's easy to forget an actor is playing him. And Carla Gugino (the wholesome mom from the *Spy Kid* movies) exudes the luscious, overripe sexuality of male-targeted comics so closely that, days after seeing the movie, I recall her as having been drawn. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Miller is best known for revitalizing Batman in 1986 in *The Dark Knight Returns*, depicting an aging, tormented masked avenger who comes out of retirement. It wasn't kid stuff, and much that Miller has done since then has been more brutal, more experimental, more stylistically and conceptually complex.

As someone who adored the art of Jim Steranko and Neal Adams in the 1960s and '70s but who drifted away from comics as Miller was earning his reputation, I resisted early claims of his singular greatness. Steranko's influence permeates Miller's work, along with that of Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, Bernie Krigstein and others. What truly sets him apart, though, is his writing and sensibility.

He's rebuffed most overtures from Hollywood over the years because he feared filmmakers couldn't capture that sensibility. Robert Rodriguez (*Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, the *Spy Kids* movies) wouldn't take no **REGISSEUR**. The Austin maverick shot test scenes at his own expense, then showed Miller a script essentially of boiled-down dialogue from the books. The movie, he insisted, would be a "translation," not an adaptation. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** That's why Rodriguez — who typically writes, directs, photographs, edits, composes the music and designs the visual effects for his films — opted not to take a screenwriter credit. That omission isn't all that's unusual about the credits. Rodriguez took Miller on as co-director, even though this meant quitting the Directors Guild because the move violated union rules.

Even more unusual is the listing of Quentin Tarantino as a "special guest director." A huge promoter of digital filmmaking, Rodriguez thought the best way to demonstrate its merits to Tarantino — who prefers film to digital video — was to immerse his friend in the process.

VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS

Tarantino directed one scene, but his influence is most apparent in the movie's structure. Like *Pulp Fiction*, it isn't told in chronological order, and characters from one story pop up in minor roles elsewhere. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The film was shot entirely in Austin, but you won't recognize landmarks because the actors worked in front of green screens at Rodriguez's Troublemaker Studios. Later, his visual effects team added the backgrounds, all drawn from the comic books.

Rodriguez's work has been moving in this direction for years. It always has been clear that, from his Central Texas enclave, he was pioneering what could very well be the future of filmmaking. But his work seemed so inconsequential that it was hard to get excited.

Ultimately, *Sin City* also is inconsequential. Except for the striking images, it starts to fade even as you're watching it. It is such a bold and striking movie, however, that for the first time we can appreciate the full potential of what Rodriguez has wrought. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

Review 3:

Sin City

BY ROGER EBERT / March 31, 2005

Chicago Sun-Times

If film noir was not a genre, but a hard man on mean streets with a lost lovely in his heart and a gat in his gut, his nightmares would look like "*Sin City*." The new movie by **Robert Rodriguez** **REGISSEUR** and Frank Miller plays like a convention at the movie museum in **Quentin Tarantino's subconscious** **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**. A-list action stars rub shoulders with snaky villains and sexy wenches, in a city where the streets are always wet, the cars are ragtops and everybody smokes. It's a black-and-white world, except for blood, which is red, eyes which are green, hair which is blond, and the Yellow Bastard.

This isn't an adaptation of a comic book, it's like a comic book brought to life and pumped with steroids. **SUBTILITEIT – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** It contains characters who occupy stories, but

to describe the characters and summarize the stories would be like replacing the weather with a weather map.

The movie is not about narrative but about style. It internalizes the harsh world of the Frank Miller "[Sin City](#)" comic books and processes it through computer effects, grotesque makeup, lurid costumes and dialogue that chops at the language of noir **GEBRUIK HAT**. The actors are mined for the archetypes they contain; [Bruce Willis](#), [Mickey Rourke](#), Jessica Alba, [Rosario Dawson](#), [Benicio Del Toro](#), [Clive Owen](#) and the others are rotated into a hyperdimension. We get not so much their presence as their essence; the movie is not about what the characters say or what they do, but about who they are in our wildest dreams. **INTERPRETATIE**

On the movie's Web site, there's a slide show juxtaposing the original drawings of Frank Miller with the actors playing the characters, and then with the actors transported by effects into the visual world of graphic novels. Some of the stills from the film look so much like frames of the comic book as to make no difference. And there's a narration that plays like the captions at the top of the frame, setting the stage and expressing a stark existential world view. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

Rodriguez has been aiming toward "[Sin City](#)" for years. I remember him leaping out of his chair and bouncing around a hotel room, pantomiming himself filming "Spy Kids 2" with a digital camera and editing it on a computer. The future! he told me. This is the future! You don't wait six hours for a scene to be lighted. You want a light over here, you grab a light and put it over here. You want a nuclear submarine, you make one out of thin air and put your characters into it.

I held back, wondering if perhaps the Spy Kids would have been better served if the films had not been such a manic demonstration of his method. But never mind; the first two "[Spy Kids](#)" were exuberant fun ("Spy Kids 3-D" sucked, in great part because of the 3-D). Then came his "[Once Upon a Time in Mexico](#)" (2003), and I wrote it was "more interested in the moment, in great shots, in surprises and ironic reversals and closeups of sweaty faces, than in a coherent story." Yes, but it worked.

And now Rodriguez has found narrative discipline in the last place you might expect, by choosing to follow the Miller comic books almost literally **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. A graphic artist has no time or room for drifting. Every frame contributes, and the story marches from page to page in vivid action snapshots. "[Sin City](#)" could easily have looked as good as it does and still been a mess, if it were not for the energy of Miller's storytelling, which is not the standard chronological account of events, but more like a tabloid murder illuminated by flashbulbs.

The movie is based on three of the "[Sin City](#)" stories, each more or less self-contained. That's wise, because at this velocity, a two-hour, one-story narrative would begin to pant before it got to the finish line. One story involves [Bruce Willis](#) as a battered old cop at war with a pedophile ([Nick Stahl](#)). One has [Mickey Rourke](#) waking up next to a dead hooker (Jaime King). One has a good guy ([Clive Owen](#)) and a wacko cop ([Benicio Del Toro](#)) disturbing the delicate balance of power negotiated between the police and the leader of the city's hookers ([Rosario Dawson](#)), who, despite her profession, moonlights as Owen's lover. Underneath everything is a deeper layer of corruption, involving a senator ([Powers Boothe](#)) whose son is not only the pedophile but also the Yellow Bastard.

We know the Bastard is yellow because the movie paints him yellow, just as the comic book did; it was a masterstroke for Miller to find a compromise between the cost of full-color reproduction and the economy of two-color pages **CONTEXT CBA**; red, green and blue also make their way into the frames. Actually, I can't even assume Miller went the two-color route for purposes of economy, because it's an effective artistic decision. **ORIGINALITEIT**

There are other vivid characters in the movie, which does not have leads so much as actors who dominate the foreground and then move on. In a movie that uses nudity as if the 1970s had survived, [Rosario Dawson's](#) stripper is a fierce dominatrix, [Carla Gugino](#) shows more skin than she could in Maxim, and Devon Aoki employs a flying guillotine that was borrowed no doubt from a circa-1970 Hong Kong exploiter. VERGELIJKING FILMS – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

Frank Miller and [Quentin Tarantino](#) are credited as co-directors, Miller because his comic books essentially act as storyboards which Rodriguez follows with ferocity, and because he was on the set every day, interacting with the actors; Tarantino because he directed one brief scene on a day when Rodriguez was determined to wean him away from celluloid and lure him over the dark side of digital. (It's the scene in the car with Owen and Del Toro, who has a pistol stuck in his head.) Tarantino also contributed something to the culture of the film, which follows his influential "[Pulp Fiction](#)" in its recycling of pop archetypes and its circular story structure. The language of the film, both dialogue and narration, owes much to the hard-boiled pulp novelists of the 1950s. VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS

Which brings us, finally, to the question of the movie's period. Skylines suggest the movie is set today. The cars range from the late 1930s through the 1950s to a recent Ferrari. The costumes are from the trench coat and G-string era. I don't think "[Sin City](#)" really has a period, because it doesn't really tell a story set in time and space. COMPLEXITEIT It's a visualization of the pulp noir imagination, uncompromising and extreme. SUBTILITEIT. Yes, and brilliant. CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST

Review 4:

A Savage and Sexy City of Pulp Fiction Regulars

By [MANOHLA DARGIS](#)

New York Times

Published: April 1, 2005

There are eight million stories in the naked city and almost as many crammed into "[Sin City](#)." Based on the comic book series of the same name by Frank Miller, who directed the film with [Robert Rodriguez](#), REGISSEUR this slavishly faithful screen adaptation tracks the ups and downs (mostly downs) of tough guys and dolls recycled from the lower depths and bottom shelves of pulp fiction. Instead of [Raymond Chandler](#), though, with his weary allusions to [Shakespeare](#) and Keats, these hard-boiled tales owe a debt to the American primitivism of Mickey Spillane and comic book legends like William Gaines. VERGELIJKING FILMS

Set in a nowhere metropolis, the film opens with a gaspingly beautiful image of a woman staring into the night. SUBTILITEIT Dressed in a shimmering gown the color of newly spilled blood, she stands with her back to the camera, oblivious. That gives us time to register that this red is the only color in a landscape exclusively painted hot white, bottomless black and silvery gray. It also gives the narrator ([Josh Hartnett](#)) time to creep up on her. Soon, the man offers the woman a cigarette and takes something far more precious from her in return. With

a few short sentences and an act of violence, the filmmakers telescope the death and desire to follow, **as well as the underlying brutality of their world.** COMPLEXITEIT

"Sin City" unfolds in a permanent midnight with only an intermittent splash of color to brighten the dark. In this shadowland, the men wear trench coats and chips on their shoulders, while the women wear next to nothing at all. **Aesthetically speaking, the filmmakers have a thing for pneumatic breasts and bondage wear, and the women in "Sin City" are conceived along the same fetishistic lines as many comic strip heroines.** GEBRUIK HAT - SUBTILITEIT Dressed in push-up bras and even a pair of chaps, they all look as if they could be on the stroll in Pigalle, including a parole officer, who likes to ramble around in thong panties and heels. It is a vision of women so comically retro you half expect the 1950's pinup Bettie Page to swing by for some fun.

Like "Pulp Fiction," which clearly influences its structure, "Sin City" turns on three tales lifted out of Mr. Miller's original. The first involves a detective with a bad ticker, Hartigan (Bruce Willis), who intersects with a sex fiend (Nick Stahl) and an 11-year-old (Makenzie Vega), who grows up to become an exotic dancer (Jessica Alba) with an undulating belly and a nice way with a lasso. Little girls apparently do not enjoy a whole lot of career choices in Sin City. Except for that parole officer (Carla Gugino) and a waitress (Brittany Murphy), all the other women in this burg are prostitutes, members of a snarling sisterhood bound together by greed, kink, self-interest and numerous lethal weapons. VERGELIJKING FILMS – CONTEXT CBA

That sisterhood features most heavily in the story hooked to a psychopath named Dwight (Clive Owen). Like the rest of the film's menagerie, Dwight is a conceit rather than a character, and would barely register save for the fact that Mr. Owen is easy on the eyes, whether jumping out of a window or locking lips with his own personal demon (Rosario Dawson). Dwight's story, a tale of jealousy and misidentification, finds him crossing paths with a thug, Jackie Boy (a barely recognizable, criminally uglified Benicio Del Toro), and not much more. Jackie Boy, whose moniker recalls that of Robert De Niro's doomed Johnny Boy in "Mean Streets," has the makings of a tragedy, but the filmmakers don't have the will. He just crashes and burns, sacrificed for the usual blood sport.

And so it goes - pow, wham, splat. The most developed story hinges on Marv, a slab of sub-humanity played by a thoroughly unrecognizable Mickey Rourke. With a face like roadkill and a pumped up body, Marv is at once the classic cartoon underdog and a pulp superman, a lonely guy who can take vengeance on the world by blowing like Krakatoa. **(Needless to say, he is also a classic identification figure for the stereotypical comic book reader.** ORIGINALITEIT) Like Hartigan and to an extent Dwight, Marv is also an avenger of women, a knight in shining black. Marv has a dream called Goldie (Jaime King), a stealthy enemy (Elijah Wood) and a taste for stomach-flipping violence. You may not look at your dog the same way after you watch Marv go about his gory work.

The scene with Marv and what turns out to be a hungry hound could have been published in William Gaines's E.C. horror comics SPANNING/SUSPENS. Originally published in 1950, these comics hit a postwar America with an understandably strong appetite for horror, and are filled with Grand Guignol laughs, distressed damsels and terrors bubbling under the surface. Like many comic book artists, Mr. Miller was influenced by E.C., **but his voice and style are also steeped in the romantic fatalism of film noir.** GEBRUIK HAT There is nothing urgent or remotely profound about "Sin City" and its pastiche of styles; here, the text is the subtext, and the horror is abstract, not rooted in the real. But Mr. Miller certainly knows how cool a guy looks, or thinks he does, walking its mean streets.

I bring up E.C. because "Sin City" has been made with such scrupulous care and obvious love for its genre influences that it's a shame the movie is kind of a bore ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. In recent years, Mr. Rodriguez has been a careless craftsman, but he went to great lengths to honor Mr. Miller's vision, even quitting the Directors Guild because it wouldn't allow the two

men to share the directing credit. But in an effort to make a faithful adaptation, Mr. Rodriguez put his own movie sense on hold, not even bothering with a real script. He didn't just try to make his "Sin City" look like a graphic novel: he tried to replicate the private experience of reading one too, slowly turned page after slowly turned page. The problem is, this is his private experience, not ours. **INTERPRETATIE**

The soporific vibe isn't helped by the fact that "Sin City" has the muffled, airless quality of some movies loaded with computer-generated imagery **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF COMMENTAAR**. The film feels as if it takes place under glass, which makes conceptual sense, since the characters don't bear any resemblance to actual life: they don't have hearts (or brains), so there's no reason they should have lungs or air to breathe. At the same time, Mr. Miller and Mr. Rodriguez's commitment to absolute unreality and the absence of the human factor mean it's hard to get pulled into the story on any level other than the visceral. When stuff goes blam, you jump like someone who's landed on a whoopee cushion. But then you just sit there, wrap yourself in the dark and try not to fall asleep.

Review 5:

So Good, It's 'Sin'-ful

By Desson Thomson

Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, April 1, 2005

THE WASHINGTON streets are snarling with the usual workaday souls: Metro-card-holding, iPod-armed yuppies. Three-piece-suited lawyers hitting their car horns 'cause they can't get to K Street fast enough. Spandexed bike messengers pumping pedals. Panhandlers claiming they need just 20 more cents for that Metro ride home. *Sure, buddy. Pull the other leg.* Yeah, another day in the big city. Wa-Sin-City, D.C.

Me? Just some two-bit hack, firing up another filterless Gitane, facing that computer keyboard. Thinking with a smile about the woman I kissed goodbye this morning.

"Don't forget to take out the garbage, hon," she said.

Dames sure know how to talk that sweet talk.

The blank screen's laughing at me now: "Go ahead, baby. Type that hard-boiled review of 'Sin City.' Tell the people how darn cool it is." **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Shuddup, you heartless pane, I tell it. Gotta stop talking *tothings*. First sign of madness, they say. Whoever "they" are. Come on, pal. You've done this before. If you can't make it sing, spit it out anyway.

Here goes: "Frank Miller's Sin City" is the hippest, darkest flick I've seen all year **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. It's not even April, mind you. So that was easy to say. But you get the picture. A movie composed of three edge-of-your-seat sagas, it's co-directed by Miller (the cool cat who wrote the 1991 graphic novel series that rocked a generation) and Robert Rodriguez **REGISSEUR**, who made "El Mariachi" and "From Dusk Till Dawn." And Quentin Tarantino, the official pimp daddy of indie-chic, even gets to guest-direct.

Tarantino, incidentally, does a scene in which Dwight, a private investigator, played by Clive Owen, is stopped by cops at a very inconvenient moment. He happens to have his trunk

loaded with severed body parts, and his passenger is sitting dead in the front seat with an all-but-severed head. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

"Sin City" takes us to Basin City, where corruption is the order of the day and daylight never seems to last too long. The cops are dirty, the hookers are armed and empowered like gangstas, and the tough guys are built like brick houses but they still get beat up anyway. It's those sleazy bars they go to. And those dames they get hooked on. In a tough world like this, it's easy to fall in love. Gives them something to believe in.

Take Marv (Mickey Rourke), a sinewy fireplug of a guy. Laughs when cops or punks rip his face. Spits out blood nonchalantly when the cops give him the once-over. But melts like an ice pop in July when a goddess beauty (Jaime King) called Goldie drapes herself around him and takes him home. Marv wakes up to find her dead and spends the rest of his life looking for the killers who iced the love of his life.

Then there's Dwight. With emotional ties to his prostitute pals, he does everything he can to save them after the death of a group of cops threatens to provoke a brutal war between the call gals and the boys in blue. That's where the hacked body parts come in. But Dwight does it for love.

An unexpected romance proves to be the spiritual guiding light for John Hartigan (Bruce Willis), who's just about the only good cop in Sin City. After an 11-year-old girl is apprehended, he risks everything to save her from a dirty cop (Michael Madsen) and a bizarre sadist (Nick Stahl) with connections in high places.

These dramas of tough, almost bionic guys and elusive, slinky women are extreme versions of the underworld sensibility that has governed a billion crime novels and films noirs of the 1940s and '50s. **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST** Miller became a cult hero for such edgy, comic book creations as Elektra (the ninja assassin) and Ronin (a hard-core samurai figure). But the "Sin City" series was his pulp fiction masterpiece **GEBRUIK HAT**. The idea of making a movie of "Sin City" would seem to be an instant disaster -- how could a film do justice to the gritty idiosyncrasies of his work? **COMPLEXITEIT**

But with their translations of Miller's "The Hard Goodbye," "The Big Fat Kill" and "That Yellow Bastard," **CONTEXT CBA** Miller and Rodriguez have achieved the near-impossible: reproducing the pictorial reality of those comic book stories onto the screen. Visually, this has been done with digital enhancement, darkly perfected sets and masterful makeup. The performers look part-cartoon and part-human and thoroughly convincing. **SUBTILITEIT**

But all the visual splendor in the world means nothing without effective performances. The list of memorables is long: Rourke has found his greatest role since "The Pope of Greenwich Village." Willis is his usual authoritatively tough-and-tender self. Owen and Benicio Del Toro (as a menacingly jealous boyfriend named Jackie Boy) are outstanding. And Elijah Wood is so luminously creepy as the psychopathic Kevin **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, you'd swear he just sprang fully formed from an M. Night Shyamalan nightmare. And those are just the guys. The women are equally formidable, including Jessica Alba as Hartigan's icon dream girl; Rosario Dawson as an Uzi-packing hooker named Gail; Brittany Murphy as a savvy, tenderhearted waitress who links all three stories; and Devon Aoki as Miho, a deadly streetwalker who uses the same swords we enjoyed in Tarantino's "Kill Bill" movies.

Yes, "Sin City" is an orgy of cynical violence, but it's a winkingly surface grimness, just like its B-movie/pulp novel ancestors. You simply appreciate this genre for what it is, or you don't **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. Rodriguez and company have so faithfully captured Miller's essence, there's something beautiful about the whole thing **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. It's an act of inspired

reverence. Whether or not the movie does well in its theatrical first run, it's a guaranteed must-see for its generation. "Sin City" has a long, long shelf life ahead. [TIJDLOOSHEID](#)

5 Offline Reviews: Superman Returns

Review 1:

The Man of Steel is back, and thank goodness

By AMY BIANCOLLI For the Chronicle

July 11, 2006, 12:03PM

Houston Chronicle

She never could spell worth a darn, but Lois Lane has gone and won a Pulitzer - for an editorial headlined, "Why the World Doesn't Need Superman."

Considering Lois', ahem, history with the Man of Steel, this might seem hypocritical, but he did fly off without saying goodbye at the end of *Superman II*. He's now been absent for five years - he was on the hunt for chunks of his home planet, Krypton - and Lois has gone on to other things. Hooked up with a nice boy (James Marsden of X-Men). Had a kid. Won that Pulitzer. Snap on you, Superman. **ONTWIKKELING KARAKTERS**

The title before us is *Superman Returns*, however, so we know what happens. Mr. Hot Pants isn't back long enough to find an apartment in Metropolis (where alter-ego-butterfingers Clark Kent labors at the Daily Planet) when he's called upon to rescue Lois on a jet that's coupled to a malfunctioning space shuttle. Kazooming through the atmosphere, Superman handily hefts aside the shuttle and catches the jet before it nosedives into a crowded baseball stadium. The fans roar.

As well they should. Superman returns not just to theaters but to form: He's as spiffy and hunky and true as he was when Christopher Reeve first donned the bitty red Speedo in 1978, and if he seems a bit more puppyish than he did then, the new look becomes him. **SUBTILITEIT**

Director Bryan Singer — who helmed the first two, superior *X-Men*— has found a Reeve look-alike and almost-sound-alike (not quite as nostrily) in Brandon Routh, but he's also found and roused the pulse of a fading franchise. **REGISSEUR**

I'm relieved earlier efforts to update Superman, Batman-style, into an angstier superhero died, because an angsty Superman is no Superman at all; updating him is like trying to bake Twinkies with aspartame. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** There's the square jaw. The steel-plate chest. The impermeable black helmet of plasticine hair. Super-de-duper strength, super-de-duper ears (to hear the cries of suffering people or, short of that, office gossip), super-duper eyes to see through walls and crush advancing bullets. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

He uses this awesome skill set to fight way-bald evildoer Lex Luthor, whose scheme to grow a new continent made of Kryptonite should yield much wealth for him and a bad case of dropsy for Superman. Kevin Spacey plays Luthor like he's making love to him, his buttery menace wrapped in a *Gatsby* wardrobe. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. As Miss Lane, Kate Bosworth is less of a tough nut than Margot Kidder's proto-Lois, who wouldn't have been caught dead eating veggie wraps with the family. But I enjoyed Parker Posey as Lex's dim floozy and Eva Marie Saint in an itty-bitty bit as Clark's human ma. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** I also enjoyed resurrected clips of the late Marlon Brando as his biological dad, Jor-El, who correctly asserts, "By now I will have been dead many thousands of your years."

Is this a more modern Superman? Yes, it's set in the 24/7 global village, and the computerized visuals are astounding: Superman has never flown so artfully, believably or fast. **SUBTILITEIT – GEBRUIK HAT**. But he hasn't changed from the upright, overgrown Boy Scout of yore, though his knickers do ride lower on his hips. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** Singer has made a film that honors its subject to the point of reverence.

It may move a little slowly, it may dwell a little much on Superman's levitating, backlit form, and it may criminally waste Kal Penn. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. But you know what? The boy in blue is back. The world needs him, all right, and it should welcome his *Return*

Review 2:

Chicago Sun-times

Superman Returns

BY ROGER EBERT / June 27, 2006

It's no fun being Superman. Your life is a lie, there's nobody you can confide in, you're in love but can't express it, and you're on call 24 hours a day. But it can be fun being in a Superman movie. The original "[Superman](#)" (1978) was an exuberance of action and humor, because [Christopher Reeve](#) could play the character straight and let us know he was kidding.

"[Superman II](#)" (1980) was just about as good, but "[Superman III](#)" (1983) was a disappointment. "[Superman IV: The Quest for Peace](#)," with Reeve, bombed in 1987, and then the series was quiet for 19 years. Now the Man of Steel is back in [Bryan Singer's](#) **REGISSEUR** "[Superman Returns](#)," which, like its hero, spends a lot of time dead in the water.

This is a glum, lackluster movie in which even the big effects sequences seem dutiful instead of exhilarating. **SUBTILITEIT – GEBRUIK HAT** The newsroom of the *Daily Planet*, filled with eccentricity and life in the earlier movies, now seems populated by corporate drones

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. Jimmy Olsen, the copy boy, such a brash kid, seems tamed and clueless. Lois Lane ([Kate Bosworth](#)) has lost her dash and pizzazz, and her fiance, [Richard White](#) ([James Marsden](#)), regards her like a deer caught in the headlights. Even the editor, Perry White ([Frank Langella](#)), comes across less like a curmudgeon, more like an efficient manager.

One problem is with the casting. **Brandon Routh lacks charisma as Superman, and I suppose as Clark Kent, he isn't supposed to have any FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT.** Routh may have been cast because he looks a little like Reeve, but there are times when he looks more like an action figure; **were effects used to make him seem built from synthetics?** **SUBTILITEIT** We remember the chemistry between [Christopher Reeve](#) and [Margot Kidder](#) (Lois Lane) in the original "Superman" movie, and then observe how their counterparts are tongue-tied in this one. If they had a real romance (and they did), has it left them with nothing more than wistful looks and awkward small talk?

It's strange how little dialogue the title character has in the movie. Clark Kent is monosyllabic, and Superman is microsyllabic SUBTILITEIT. We learn Superman was away for five years on a mission to the remains of his home planet, Krypton. In the meantime, Lois got herself a boyfriend and a little son, played by [Tristan Lake Leabu](#), who mostly stares at people like a beta version of Damien, the kid from "[The Omen](#)." Now Superman and (coincidentally) Clark have returned, Clark gets his old job, and Lex Luthor ([Kevin Spacey](#)) is out of prison and plotting to rule the earth.

Lex's plan: use crystals from kryptonite to raise up a new continent in the mid-Atlantic and flood most of the surface of the populated world. Then he'll own all the real estate. Location, location, location. Alas, the craggy landscape he produces couldn't be loved by a mountain goat and won't be habitable for a million years, but never mind. **Spacey plays Luthor as sour and sadistic; he has no fun with the role, nor do we.** ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

As for Superman, he's a one-trick pony. To paraphrase Archimedes: "Give me a lever and a place to stand, and I will move the universe." **Superman doesn't need the lever or the place to stand, but as he positions himself in flight, straining to lift an airplane or a vast chunk or rock, we reflect that these activities aren't nearly as cinematic as what Batman and Spider-Man get up to VERGELIJKING FILMS.** Watching Superman straining to hold a giant airliner, I'm wondering: Why does he strain? Does he have his limits? Would that new Airbus be too much for him? What about if he could stand somewhere? **SUBTILITEIT**

Superman is vulnerable to one, and only one, substance: kryptonite. He knows this. We know this. Lex Luthor knows this. Yet he has been disabled by kryptonite in every one of the movies. Does he think Lex Luthor would pull another stunt without a supply on hand? Why doesn't he take the most elementary precautions? How can a middle-aged bald man stab the Man of Steel with kryptonite? COMPLEXITEIT

Now about Lois' kid. We know who his father is, and Lois knows, and I guess the kid knows, although he calls Richard his daddy. But why is nothing done with this character SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT? He sends a piano flying across a room, but otherwise he just stares with big, solemn eyes, like one of those self-sufficient little brats you can't get to talk. It would have been fun to give Superman a bright, sassy child, like one of the Spy Kids, and make him a part of the plot.

There is I suppose a certain bottom line of competence in "Superman Returns POSITIEF/NEGATIEF," and superhero fans will want to see the movie just for its effects, its plot outrages and its moments of humor. VOORSPELLING REACTIE – HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID But when the hero, his alter ego, his girlfriend and the villain all seem to lack any joy in being themselves, why should we feel joy at watching them?

Review 3:
HE'S BACK

'Superman Returns' gets the Man of Steel right. Clark and Lois are bigger challenges.

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
Tuesday, June 27, 2006
San Fransisco Chronicle

"Superman Returns" is the Superman movie for everyone who was sitting around thinking, "I just wish someone would make another Superman movie." For everyone else, the picture has to cross one little threshold of skepticism: **Why this again? ORIGINALITEIT**

Last year, "Batman Begins" answered that question by going deeper into the Batman backstory, while still delivering a first-rate action movie. But "Superman Returns" finds no reason for being, other than that it's summer and computer graphics have improved since the superhero days of Christopher Reeve. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

On the plus side, there is one flat-out great action sequence near the start of the movie, involving a plane full of reporters and the Space Shuttle. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** There is also Kevin Spacey, who, as the evil Lex Luthor, is even better than his predecessor, Gene Hackman. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** On the downside, the movie is 154 minutes of mostly bloat, with a new Superman who is just OK (though he looks good) and Kate Bosworth, in an unfortunate wig, playing Lois Lane as though she took nasty pills. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

A little secret about Superman: Any guy, provided that he looks like a black-haired Adonis, can play the superhero. So the real deal here is to find someone who can play Clark Kent. One of the fun things about Reeve is the way he made Clark goofy, not as though he were really goofy but rather as though Superman were quietly enjoying the spectacle of others underestimating him. Lois (Margot Kidder) felt sorry for him, and that seemed to amuse him, too. He was like Zorro, a man so sure of his own essence that he didn't mind people thinking less of him.

But as played by Brandon Routh in "Superman Returns," Clark Kent is goofy because he really is a dork. He's a shy guy. He's not shy in his Superman incarnation, but that's only because Superman is his comfort zone. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** As Clark, he falls apart every time he's around Lois. This isn't funny, and it becomes downright uncomfortable when Lois treats him with thinly veiled contempt. **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** At one point, Clark refers to their "relationship," and she throws the word back in his face, as though he were a complete idiot.

"Superman Returns" was directed by Bryan Singer ("X-Men"), **REGISSEUR** who is attuned to the action potential of the story, but his movie has no warmth, and Bosworth is a big part of the problem. **SUBTILITEIT** It's a heck of a thing to say that the intricacies of playing Lois Lane are outside an actress' sphere, but whatever those intricacies are, they elude Bosworth, possibly because she's simply too young for the role. She was 22 at the time of filming, and her idea of playing a 30-year-old professional woman was to act confrontational and aggrieved and never smile. This is a younger person's naive conception of strength, the notion that the path to success is to behave as if the whole world were trying to pick you up in a bar and you're not having it.

With the human dimension to the story obviated, we're left with Lex Luthor's diabolical machinations, and Spacey makes up for some of the lack of the human element in the rest of the story. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. In the previous "Superman" series, the Lex Luthor scenes were often cartoony and tiresome, but Spacey -- with his quiet contempt and his aura of self-love -- turns Lex into someone we can understand, a loner and an epicure, who likes good music (though he never strays from the basic repertory), literature and beautiful surroundings but who can't connect with people. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Every so often we look at him and see

the distance between Luthor's self-image and his reality, and he becomes ridiculous and pathetic, in the way dictators sometimes are. Spacey is paired with Parker Posey, as his moll, who is usually as funny as he HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID is, but the movie gives her little to do but stand there and look appalled.

Actually, Spacey is so good that he's almost a problem. Who are you going to root for, the intelligent, enterprising human being with opera playing on the stereo, or this bulked-up space alien who's scared of a pretty girl? COMPLEXITEIT Eventually, Superman regains our allegiance, but the fact that it ever comes into question is a mark of what's missing. Kidder and Reeve always were the most likable people in their "Superman" movies. Here, Routh comes in a distant second to Spacey, and Bosworth isn't in the running.

Yet for many in the "Superman Returns" target audience, to talk about the performances and the interaction of characters is as pointless as talking about what the actors ate for lunch on the set. It's all about visuals and action sequences. Along that line, the movie consistently delivers in lots of little ways, but in a big way only once, in a spectacular sequence that begins with a series of earthquakes and culminates in an airline catastrophe. Lois is on a passenger plane that's careening out of control, and Superman has to catch it, put out the fire and land it. It's a brilliantly conceived and executed sequence. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – GEBRUIK HAT

However, the huge set piece for the latter part of the picture, in which Lois goes off to rescue Superman, is hampered by the movie's tepid emotions. An action sequence isn't just about spectacular visions but about making audiences care about those visuals, about what they mean for the characters. There, "Superman Returns" comes up short. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 4:

With nod to past, 'Superman' flies

Boston Globe

By Ty Burr

06/27/2006

Because he came first, Superman is our base-model superhero. He's not broody like Batman and he doesn't have emotional acne like Spider-Man. His powers are straight up: flying, X-ray vision, super-strength -- none of this changing the weather nonsense. He stands for truth and justice without any of the winking irony our modern culture demands from a guy wearing a cape. NEGATIEVE KIJK TOV POP CULTUUR

Superman is Version 1.0.

Which is how Bryan Singer treats him in "Superman Returns" REGISSEUR, "the fine pop resurrection opening in theaters tonight. Unlike last year's "Batman Begins," this isn't a reinvention of a beloved franchise. VERGELIJKING FILMS – ORIGINALITEIT It's a renewal, a continuation of what has come before. Singer, the gifted writer-director who made "The Usual Suspects" and the first two "X-Men" movies, respects everything about this property except the last two sequels.

He raises Marlon Brando from the dead, casts the actors who played Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane on the 1950s TV series in cameo roles, dedicates the film to Christopher and Dana Reeve, and even dusts off John Williams's title theme from 1978's "Superman."

The upshot of all this veneration is a generally thrilling entertainment that's not quite the grand slam you want it to be. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE** "Superman Returns" travels from Metropolis to the North Pole, from outer space to the ocean's depths, but in the end it feels just a little Smallville. You don't mind terribly, but you're conscious of the missed chance.

How's the new kid, by the way? Good enough so that you don't really notice there is a new kid. The role of Superman has to be played by a newcomer -- a known star would bring baggage along -- and like Reeve in 1978, Brandon Routh is tall, dark, handsome, and so sincere as to be faintly comical. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT – HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. The character embodies unadorned decency, and that makes others assume he's a square, especially when he has the Clark Kent glasses on. An actor has to be focused enough and bland enough to make that work, and Routh has both qualifications. He's like Reeve's slightly soulful younger brother; somewhere in the Fortress of Solitude, there's an iPod with James Blunt songs on it. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

"Returns" picks up about five years after 1980's "Superman II" left off. Our hero has been away on extended leave, looking for the remains of his home planet in the depths of space, and the world has finally moved on. Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth with dyed brown tresses and not enough edge) has penned an editorial titled "Why the World Doesn't Need Superman" and is getting ready to receive a Pulitzer for it.

Then Superman rides a meteor back to his adoptive mother's back yard (Ma Kent being played by dear old Eva Marie Saint), and we're back in business. Clark gets back his old job at the Daily Planet, Perry White (Frank Langella) is as ulcerous as ever, and Jimmy Olsen (Sam Huntington) still looks pre-pubescent. Nothing has changed.

Scratch that. Lois is now a single mom to a sickly little kid named Jason (Tristan Lake Leabu), and she's engaged to Perry's nephew, Richard, a sensitive upper-management type played by James Marsden, of the "X-Men" movies.

Worse, Lex Luthor is on the loose again, with yet another plan for world domination. This role is always reserved for our slyest current character actor/star: Gene Hackman in 1978 and Kevin Spacey here. Where the former brought a manic, impatient giggle to the proceedings, Spacey just looks magnificently bored. This Luthor knows he's smarter than Superman, and it drives him crazy that he doesn't get the recognition.

The story line in "Superman Returns" never convincingly gels. **COMPLEXITEIT** -- something about Luthor getting hold of magic crystals from the Fortress of Solitude and using them to seed a new continent off the Eastern Seaboard, with a bit of green Kryptonite to keep any stray superheroes at bay. Anyway, Singer is more interested in emotional matters and overall tone. **INTERPRETATIE**. He spends a lot of time re-stoking the flames of Lois and Superman's

romance, indulging in a flight over Metropolis that's not so much an improvement over the Reeve/Margot Kidder original as a loving nod to it.

"Superman Returns" even pushes a Christ parallel, thankfully not too hard. Unused footage of Marlon Brando's Jor-El from the 1978 Richard Donner "Superman" is folded into a Fortress of Solitude scene early on, and the actor's voice keeps popping up throughout, reminding the hero that "I have sent them you, my only son." (Brando may be God, but this is ridiculous.) This isn't "The Passion of the Clark," but it's uncomfortably close. **SUBTILITEIT**

What's missing from the film is the popcorn exhilaration you get from action scenes that build dynamically throughout a narrative **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. Mayhem junkies will be happy with an early sequence where Superman stops a plane from nose-diving into a baseball stadium, and there's a funny slow-motion gag that illustrates the impact of a bullet on the hero **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**. (None; what were you expecting?) A scene where one of the subordinate villains steps to a piano and lights into "Heart and Soul" is so witty you wish there were more of it.

In general, though, the film never quite establishes the necessary momentum. Singer tends to his main characters while stranding gifted talents like Parker Posey (as Luthor's moll) and Kal Penn (as a henchman) on the sidelines, and he springs exactly one big plot surprise and doesn't do much with it. Presumably there'll be a payoff in the next film, but that leaves this one in the lurch. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

So it's a good film but not a great one; at the very least, you can tell the people behind "Superman Returns" have an abiding fondness for this 70-year-old pop myth. They're not hacks, and this isn't "Superman IV: The Quest for Peace ." Still, you may wonder if a fan's worship can be its own kind of green Kryptonite.

Review 5:

Stephen Hunter
Washington Post
28-06-06

SUPERMAN RETURNS

Superman's been gone for five years seeking remnants of Krypton among the stars in "Superman Returns." Satisfied, if melancholy that the old home orb is forever gone, he returns to Earth to pick up where he left off and discovers what Thomas Wolfe really meant by "You Can't Go Home Again."

Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth), for example, now has a child. Her boyfriend has great teeth, Daily Planet Editor Perry White has morphed into lounge-lizard Frank Langella and Lex Luthor (Kevin

Spacey) has just exited the slammer, copped billions from an old lady and started a new shenanigan.

The lack of forward momentum in the movie's first half makes room for a lot of pleasant lateral movement. **SUBTILITEIT** We get to watch Superman (Brandon Routh) rescue Lois in an elaborate sequence in which her plane, trailing flame and shreds of twisted metal, is headed for the dirt **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. He puts it gently down in Shea Stadium before the thousands of adoring Mets fans who commemorate the return. If only he had a good fastball!

It follows that Lois and Clark deal with buried feelings, and there's even world enough and time for Supe to remember his boyhood in Iowa, where the corn grew as high as an elephant's eye but where he could leap as far as a thousand elephants, end on end or on top of each other.

What's missing? Oh, right, a caper. A plot **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF - COMPLEXITEIT**. Hmm, the movie's an hour and a half old, and nobody's done anything yet. In fairness, the plot is just strutwork upon which to mount ever more elaborate set pieces, as Superman shunts faster than a speeding e-mail from crisis to crisis to undo the effects of Luthor's villainy.

But the news is good. It's a myth, not a miss. **The bottom line is that Superman has returned and, again, you will believe that a man can fly, and that virtue is its own reward.**

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

5 Offline reviews: 300

Review 1: Chicago Sun-Times

300
August 4, 2008

By Roger Ebert

Going back to review one I missed.

I gave a four-star rating to "[Sin City](#)," the 2005 film based on a graphic novel by Frank Miller. Now, as I deserve, I get "300," based on another work by Miller. Of the earlier film, I wrote prophetically: "This isn't an adaptation of a comic book, it's like a comic book brought to life and pumped with steroids." They must have been buying steroids wholesale for "300." Every single male character, including the hunchback, has the muscles of a finalist for Mr. Universe. VERGELIJKING TUSSEN FILMS

Both films are faithful to Miller's plots and drawings. "300," I learn, reflects the book almost panel-by-panel. CONTEXT CBA They lean so heavily on CGI that many shots are entirely computer-created FOCUS OP ELEMENTEN VAN SPEKTAKEL. Why did I like the first, and dislike the second? Perhaps because of the subject matter, always a good place to start. POS/NEG COMMENTAAR "[Sin City](#)," directed by [Robert Rodriguez](#) VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS and Miller, is film noir, my favorite genre, taken to the extreme. "300," directed by [Zack Snyder](#), REGISSEUR IS BENOEMD is ancient carnage, my least favorite genre, taken beyond the extreme. "[Sin City](#)" has vividly- conceived characters and stylized dialogue. "300" has one-dimensional caricatures who talk like professional wrestlers plugging their next feud.

The movie involves a legendary last stand by 300 death-obsessed Spartans against a teeming horde of Persians. So brave and strong are the Spartans that they skewer, eviscerate, behead and otherwise inconvenience tens of thousands of Persians before finally falling to the weight of overwhelming numbers. The lesson is that the Spartans are free, and the Persians are slaves, although the Spartan idea of freedom is not appetizing (children are beaten to toughen them). INTERPRETATIE VAN DE FILM

But to return to those muscles. Although real actors play the characters and their faces are convincing, SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID I believe their bodies are almost entirely digital creations. They have Schwarzeneggerian biceps, and every last one of them, even the greybeards, wear well-defined six-packs on their abs. I can almost believe the star, [Gerald Butler](#), may have been working out at Gold's Gym ever since he starred as the undernourished Phantom of the Opera, but not 300, 200 or even 100 extras. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID As a result, every single time I regarded the Spartans in a group, I realized I was seeing artistic renderings, not human beings. FOCUS ELEMENTEN VAN SPEKTAKEL

Well, maybe that was the idea.

The movie presents other scenes of impossibility. Look at the long- shots of the massed Persians. There are so many they would have presented a logistical nightmare: How to feed and water them? Consider the slave-borne chariot that Xerxes pulls up in. It is larger than the imperial throne in the Forbidden City, with a wide staircase leading up to Xerxes. Impressive, but how could such a monstrosity be lugged all the way from Persia to Greece? I am not expected to apply such logic, I know, but the movie flaunts its preposterous effects. SUBTILITEIT/GELOOFWAARDIGHEID

And what about Xerxes ([Rodrigo Santoro](#)) himself? He stands around eight feet tall, I guess, which is good for 500 B.C. (Santoro's height in life: 6 feet, 2.75 inches). He towers over Leonidas (Butler), so we know his body isn't really there. But what of his face? I am just about prepared to believe that the ancient Persians went in for the piercing of ears, cheeks, eyebrows, noses, lips and chins. But his eyebrow have been plucked and re-drawn into black arches that would make [Joan Crawford](#) envious. And what about the mascara and the cute little white lines on the eyelids? When the Spartans describe the Athenians as "philosophers and boy-lovers," I wish they had gone right ahead to discuss the Persians.

The Spartans travel light. They come bare-chested, dressed in sandals, bikini briefs and capes. They carry swords and shields. At the right time, they produce helmets which must have been concealed in their loincloths. Also apples. And from the looks of them, protein shakes. They are very athletic, able to construct a towering wall of thousands of dead Persians in hours, even after going to all the trouble of butchering them. When they go into battle, their pep talks sound like the screams of drunken sports fans swarming onto the field.

They talk, as I suggested, like pro wrestlers, touting the big showdown between Edge and The Undertaker. "Be afraid!" they rumble, stopping just short of adding, "Be very afraid." They talk about going on the "warpath," unaware that the phrase had not yet been coined by American Indians. Their women, like Gorgo ([Lena Headey](#)), queen of Leonidas, are as bloodthirsty as their men, just like wrestler's wives.

All true enough. But my deepest objection to the movie is that it is so blood-soaked. When dialogue arrives to interrupt the carnage, it's like the seventh-inning stretch. In slow motion, blood and body parts spraying through the air, the movie shows dozens, hundreds, maybe thousands, of horrible deaths. This can get depressing. **ONTROERING**

In old movies, ancient Greeks were usually sort of noble. Now they have become lager louts. They celebrate a fascist ideal. They assume a bloodthirsty audience, or one suffering from attention deficit (how many disembowelings do you have to see to get the idea?). They have no grace and wisdom in their speech. Nor dignity in their bearing: They strut with arrogant pride. They are a nasty bunch. As [Joe Mantegna](#) says in "[House of Games](#)," "You're a bad pony, and I'm not gonna bet on you." That's right before he dies, of course.

Review 2: Houston Chronicle

Door: Amy Biancolli

03/09/07

"Prepare for glory!" yowls the granitic and pointy-bearded Spartan king to his virile troops in 300, **a handsome monstrosity of a film** **SUBTILITEIT - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE.**

This directive has been repeated on every shred of the movie's advertising, priming audiences for a battle between muscle-head combatants on a beach in ancient Greece. Glory? Sure, there's glory, along with a pop-eyed ogre and a smashingly accessorized Persian god-boy with a brow as plucked as Barbie's.

But brace yourselves for something else, too. Prepare for a film that decapitates with conviction, splatters with glee, poses like a fitness mag, emotes like an opera, intones like a sportscaster and plays out like Homer in the age of comic books **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST.** It is to conventional cinema what graphic novels are to prose:

mannered, trenchant and chesty **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST – GEBRUIK HAT**. (Not since *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* have an actor's pectorals been so alarming.) **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

It's also the strangest and most deliriously violent movie I have ever confessed to liking.

300 is based on the graphic novel by Frank Miller (who wrote and illustrated) and Lynn Varley (who created its distinctive, slashy colors) **and directed by Zack Snyder** **REGISSEUR**, whose waggish re-do of *Dawn of the Dead* shed similar quantities of blood in a similarly losing battle.

In that film, a brave few mall denizens staved off teeming hordes of the hungry undead. In this one, the brave few are 300 Spartan warriors, 480 B.C., and the teeming hordes are Persian armies on a quest for world domination. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** The setting has moved from suburban tarmac to the Battle of Thermopylae, where the Greeks fight off invaders at a narrow pass.

Leading the Spartans and their much-wussier Arcadian allies is King Leonidas, he of the pointy beard and Ricardo Montalban bustiness.

I cannot say enough nice things about Leonidas or the actor who plays him, Gerard Butler, who's never been a wispy presence in film (*Beowulf and Grendel*, *Phantom of the Opera*) but here comes across as a large hunk of metamorphic rock **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. He's elemental. So much of the film is so thoroughly green-screened — so beautifully computerized **SUBTILITEIT** — that I began to wonder whether Butler himself was assembled by techies with only Miller's book and a few Greek myths to guide them.

The whole undertaking has this look about it — this geek-chic celebration of demigod six-packs and mondo-stylized overstatement. **GEBRUIK HAT** Scenes are staged from comic-book angles, with comic-book lighting, casting comic-book shadows that darken vistas of dreamlike trickery. **CONTEXT CBA** Realism is nowhere to be found, replaced by go-go gory reenactments in which gobs of blood fly in perfect arcs and combat rings with the splish! krak! shkreek! of death by metal pike. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

Every few minutes comes a scene of fantastic artifice: the arrival of the Persian disco-king Xerxes (Brazilian star Rodrigo Santoro) on a temple carried by slaves, or a gray cloud of arrows that curve toward Spartans huddled under shields. Snyder's movie is as breathy, epic and expressionistic as many classic silent films, hacking huge emotions from fire-eating dialogue **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST** ("Hold! Give up nothing! But take from them everything!") that might have ripped from title cards.

It's airless, but so are graphic novels; it's hyperbolic, but so is the mythos of war **COMPLEXITEIT**. Is *300* faithful to history? For all I know, Spartan foot soldiers yelled "Ah-whooh! Ah-whooh! Ah-whooh!" (sort of a reverse Marine Corps "Ooh-rah!") before plunging into battle. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

A better question to ask is: Does the film stay faithful to the Miller and Varley's vision? Indeed it does — to a kunch!

**Review 3:
New York Times**

**Door: A.O. Scott
03/08/07**

Battle of the Manly Men: Blood Bath With a Message

"300" is about as violent as "Apocalypto" and twice as stupid. VERGELIJKING FILMS Adapted from a graphic novel by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley, it offers up a bombastic spectacle of honor and betrayal. CONTEXT CBA, rendered in images that might have been airbrushed onto a customized van sometime in the late 1970s. SUBTILITEIT. The basic story is a good deal older. It's all about the ancient Battle of Thermopylae, which unfolded at a narrow pass on the coast of Greece whose name translates as Hot Gates.

Hot Gates, indeed! Devotees of the pectoral, deltoid and other fine muscle groups will find much to savor as King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) leads 300 prime Spartan porters into battle against Persian forces commanded by Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro), a decadent self-proclaimed deity who wants, as all good movie villains do, to rule the world.

The Persians, pioneers in the art of facial piercing, have vastly greater numbers — including ninjas, dervishes, elephants, a charging rhino and an angry bald giant — but the Spartans clearly have superior health clubs and electrolysis facilities. They also hew to a warrior ethic of valor and freedom that makes them, despite their gleeful appetite for killing, the good guys in this tale. (It may be worth pointing out that unlike their mostly black and brown foes, the Spartans and their fellow Greeks are white.)

But not all the Spartans back in Sparta support their king on his mission. A gaggle of sickly, corrupt priests, bought off by the Persians, consult an oracular exotic dancer whose topless gyrations lead to a warning against going to war. And the local council is full of appeasers and traitors, chief among them a sardonic, shifty-eyed smoothy named Theron (Dominic West, known to fans of "The Wire" as the irrepressible McNulty).

Too cowardly to challenge Leonidas man to man, he fixes his attention on Queen Gorgo (Lena Headey), a loyal wife and Spartan patriot who fights the good fight on the home front. Gorgo understands her husband's noble purpose, the higher cause for which he is willing to sacrifice his life. "Come home with your shield or on it," she tells him as he heads off into battle after a night of somber marital whoopee. Later she observes that "freedom is not free."

Another movie — Matt Stone and Trey Parker's "Team America," whose wooden puppets were more compelling actors than most of the cast of "300 VERGELIJKING FILMS" — calculated the cost at \$1.05. I would happily pay a nickel less, in quarters or arcade tokens, for a vigorous 10-minute session with the video game that "300" aspires to become. Its digitally tricked-up color scheme, while impressive at times SUBTILITEIT, is hard to tolerate for nearly two hours ENTERTAINMENTVARING (true masochists can seek out the Imax version), and the hectic battle scenes would be much more exciting in the first person. I want to chop up some Persians too!

There are a few combat sequences that achieve a grim, brutal grandeur, notably an early engagement in which the Spartans, hunkered behind their shields, push back against a Persian line, forcing enemy soldiers off a cliff into the water. The big idea, spelled out over and over in voice-over and dialogue in case the action is too subtle, is that the free, manly men of Sparta fight harder and more valiantly than the enslaved masses under Xerxes' command. Allegory hunters will find some gristly morsels of topicality tossed in their direction, but you can find many of the same themes, conveyed with more nuance and irony, in a Pokémon cartoon. INTERPRETATIE - COMPLEXITEIT

Zack Snyder's first film REGISSEUR, a remake of George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead," showed wit as well as technical dexterity. While some of that filmmaking acumen is evident here, the script for "300," which he wrote with Kurt Johnstad and Michael B. Gordon, POSITIEF/NEGATIEF is weighed down by the lumbering portentousness of the original book

COMPLEXITEIT, whose arresting images are themselves undermined by the kind of pomposity that frequently mistakes itself for genius.

In time, "300" may find its cultural niche as an object of camp derision, like the sword-and-sandals epics of an earlier, pre-computer-generated-imagery age. At present, though, its muscle-bound, **grunting self-seriousness is more tiresome than entertaining** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. Go tell the Spartans, whoever they are, to stay home and watch wrestling.

"300" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). Much butchery, some lechery.

Review 4:

San Fransisco Chronicle

Door: Mick LaSalle

03/09/07

Strange world of Sparta is not for the meek

In 480 B.C., 300 Spartans faced thousands of invading Persians in the Battle of Thermopylae. That's the subject of "300," **and as with all movies set in the distant past, it presents a double and seemingly contradictory challenge to the filmmakers: to make history vital and immediate to a modern audience, while conveying the strangeness of it all, the cultural distance from us and the enormous gulf of time between then and now.** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Most filmmakers are happy to fulfill only the first challenge -- to make the story relevant, or at least accessible. But the makers of "300," basing their film on the graphic novel by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley, take the second challenge seriously. They take pains to show the strangeness of Sparta, at least from our perspective -- its brutality, its fanatical obsession with warfare and its code of manhood. **The movie thrusts us into this bizarre warlike culture and then, just as we're beginning to get our balance, it surprises us by quickly establishing that these, in fact, are the good guys. The invading Persians are even worse -- mystical, cruel and autocratic, with no proto-democratic traditions.** **COMPLEXITEIT**

The hairstyles and manners of dress aren't softened for our benefit but are presented with accuracy, with all their jutting beards and braids **SUBTILITEIT**. If you've ever seen an exhibition of ancient statuary, "300" is like watching marble turn to flesh and blood, and the effect is fascinating. There are probably as many six-pack abs on the men here as you'll find on the statues in Rome's Capitoline Museums. **It's worth noting, incidentally, that those sculpted bodies make this one of the great beefcake extravaganzas of 2007** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**.

Watching "300," there's the arresting sense of eavesdropping on another time. Things happen that make little sense to us, in terms of our own practices. For example, when King Leonidas -- the commanding Gerard Butler - gets annoyed at a Persian messenger, he kills him and his entire retinue. **COMPLEXITEIT** I particularly like the little grace note: Before he does it, he steals a glance at his wife, Queen Gorgo (Lena Headey), who nods. We think the nod means "Spare them." It means quite the opposite. This is our welcome to Sparta. The movie is letting us know that we've never been to a place like this.

Yet for all the film's fidelity to matters of style and culture, director Zack Snyder REGISSEUR doesn't offer us a realistic treatment but something more adventurous and intuitive. The colors are exaggerated, sometimes underexposed, sometimes overexposed, sometimes excessively red, sometimes excessively blue SUBTILITEIT. The battle scenes call to mind the film's graphic-novel origins, so that blood never flows like real blood but bursts out in discrete pieces, like rose petals. CONTEXT CBA

Significantly, this hyper-stylization of "300" is limited to its visuals GEBRUIK HAT. The performances are played straight, and this combination -- straight performances and stylized visuals -- produces an uncanny effect. It's as if the movie is reminding us we're not seeing history as it truly appeared, even if this is history as it happened. We're getting it through the gauze of memory, or legend. INTERPRETATIE

This layer of distance, achieved visually, works in many ways. For one thing, it allows viewers to witness the butchery of ancient combat -- the severed arms, legs and heads -- without having to wallow in buckets of gore FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. It also allows the filmmakers to show these things without worrying about revolting the audience. But this extra distance works in more subtle, emotional ways as well. Because we can never forget we're seeing something foreign to our world -- because we don't get lulled, in the usual movie way, into fusing our reality with that of the characters -- it's easier to take the characters and their behavior on their terms GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE. The distance also creates an underlying sadness. This may be a boisterous movie, lively and full of action, but the director never lets us forget that we're seeing something gone and almost lost to time.

You'll notice we're at the end of the review and with little said about the story or the actors. Actually, you know everything you need to know about the story - 300 soldiers versus tens of thousands - and in a movie such as this, the acting takes a backseat both to narrative drive and to the vistas of stone and hard flesh, like something out of a Frank Frazetta painting CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST. However, Butler must be singled out for praise. He played Beowulf recently ("Beowulf & Grendel") and didn't fare nearly as well, having to share a girlfriend with an 8-foot monster. Here, working with material worthy of him, he enters into the ancient psychology of the role and comes back every inch a king. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

Review 5: Toronto Star

Door: Peter Howell
03/09/07

'300': Full-bore gore

All you sissies and pantywaists, out of the theatre. This means you, Skippy, cowering in the corner with your man purse and your granola bar.

The Spartan warrior movie 300 is not for the meek, despite its visual virtues and high thrill quotient. SUBTILITEIT It's a total-immersion battle experience for eaters of red meat, worshippers of the male physique and lovers of extreme violence. GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE

That last qualifier is crucial. If you wince at the sight of skewered bodies and decapitated skulls, then your money is better spent on a repeat screening of *An Inconvenient Truth*.

This is the kind of film where the dead bodies really are stacked like cordwood, and then pushed in a heap on top of people who are about to become dead bodies. "Pile those Persians higher," someone commands.

The manly dudes in 300 run around nearly naked, their swords constantly at the ready.

They tell one another to have a good breakfast "because tonight we dine in hell." How those meals are connected, I'll never know. But if you're wondering what hell's cafeteria has on the menu, wonder no more. It's human kebabs.

In bringing Frank Miller's graphic novel about the ancient Battle of Thermopylae to the screen **CONTEXT CBA**, Zack Snyder **REGISSEUR** (*Dawn of the Dead* remake) has demonstrated the kind of fidelity that could earn him an eternity ring, were such girly-man behaviour tolerated. Miller's violence has been graphically rendered.

The special effects are impressive **SUBTILITEIT**, combining artistic vision with the blood-and-guts reality of warfare **GEBRUIK HAT**. It's more colourful than *Sin City* **VERGELIJKING FILMS**, Miller's other cinematic adaptation, because the desaturated reds of the painterly production design match the flowing blood.

The visuals are strong enough to sustain the anemic plot – this is Spartan in more ways than one – and dialogue that verges on the risible.

And it's a weirdly schizophrenic affair. The acres of rippling beefcake on display make this arguably the most homoerotic film ever released to the mainstream. If there's not a 300 float in this year's Pride parade, then someone deserves a Spartan spanking **COMPLEXITEIT**.

Yet the film manages to also be homophobic. Spartan King Leonidas (Gerard Butler, newly buff and convincingly bombastic) expresses his contempt for non-combative Athenians by dismissing them as "philosophers and boy lovers."

What's really unsettling is the gratuitous gore. Such as a post-battle scene where Leonidas munches on an apple while standing in a field of dead Persians, while his men go about crushing the skulls of fallen invaders who might still be breathing.

The movie is based on historical fact, something that could surprise anyone who understandably views *300* as simply a fanboy's wet dream, complete with dream sequences of semi-nude goddesses.

The Battle of Thermopylae is one of the most famous showdowns of antiquity. A small but brave army of Spartans – the 300 of the title – and other Greeks banded together against the multitudes of Persia's invaders. In more recent times, we'd think of the siege of the Alamo, Custer's Last Stand or the Japanese defence of Iwo Jima. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK - INTERPRETATIE**

It's the year 480 B.C., and Leonidas is offered a Hobson's choice by the advancing armies of Persian Emperor Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro): surrender Sparta and become slaves or stand fast and be slaughtered.

Leonidas chooses a third option: fight back, and hold the barbarians long enough so that Greece can properly marshal its forces. The king has no trouble rounding up 299 brave fellow Spartans to join him, but he gets no support from the scabby soothsayers and sexy oracles who live in the nearby hilltops like Dr. Seuss characters. Leonidas is told to hold his fire until after the celebration of an annual harvest festival.

He also faces resistance from a swinish politician Theron (Dominic West), who views Leonidas as a competitor – not just for Spartan power, but also for the affections of Gorgo (Lena Headey), Leonidas's loyal wife and queen.

The Spartan king has reason beyond the "live free or die" ethos to disobey the oracles and to confront the Emperor Xerxes. The Persian leader looks like an escapee from a carnival, with

more piercings than Moby Dick **SUBTILITEIT**. Xerxes commands a menagerie of homicidal freaks that include rampaging rhinos and elephants and a dim giant. He's more clown than dictator.

Leonidas does have one ace up his sleeve: if he and his men can draw the Persians towards the narrow seaside mountain passage known as "the gates of hell," they might be able to literally put the squeeze on them.

"There is no room for softness, not in Sparta," Leonidas says. He's not kidding.

Don't worry about missing a single severed head or impaled torso. **Director Snyder** **REGISSEUR** frequently switches to slow-mo to savour every appalling act. And he's not above incorporating a Crucifixion image at the end to drive home his point about the nobility of going to war to defend your nation, **INTERPRETATIE** a subtext that will make this popular entertainment for Conservatives and Republicans everywhere. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

It's most definitely a Spartan movie, yet it's really all about wretched excess **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**.

5 offline review: Iron man

Review 1:

Iron Man

BY ROGER EBERT / June 1, 2008

by Roger Ebert
Chicago Sun-Times

When I caught up with "[Iron Man](#)," a broken hip had delayed me and the movie had already been playing for three weeks. What I heard during that time was that a lot of people loved it, that they were surprised to love it so much, and that [Robert Downey Jr.](#)'s performance was special. Apart from that, all I knew was that the movie was about a big iron man. I didn't even know that a human occupied it, and halfway thought that the Downey character's brain had been transplanted into a robot, or a fate equally weird.

Yes, I knew I was looking at sets and special effects--but I'm referring to the reality of the illusion, if that make any sense. With many superhero movies, all you get is the surface of the illusion. COMPLEXITEIT. With "[Iron Man](#)," you get a glimpse into the depths. You get the feeling, for example, of a functioning corporation. Consider the characters of Pepper Potts ([Gwyneth Paltrow](#)), Stark's loyal aide, and Obadiah Stane ([Jeff Bridges](#)), Stark's business partner. They don't feel drummed up for the occasion. They seem to have worked together for awhile. SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT

Much of that feeling is created by the chemistry involving Downey, Paltrow and Bridges. They have relationships that seem fully-formed and resilient enough to last through the whole movie, even if plot mechanics were not about to take them to another level. Between the two men, there are echoes of the relationship between [Howard Hughes](#) and [Noah Dietrich](#) in [Scorsese's "The Aviator"](#) (2004). VERGELIJKING FILMS Obadiah Stane doesn't come onscreen waving flags and winking at the camera to announce he is the villain; he seems adequately explained simply as the voice of reason at Stark's press conference. (Why did "Stark," during that scene, make me think of "staring mad?"). Between Stark and Pepper, there's that classic screen tension between "friends" who know they can potentially become lovers.

Downey's performance is intriguing, and unexpected. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. He doesn't behave like most superheroes: he lacks the psychic weight and gravitas. ORIGINALITEIT Tony Stark is created from the persona Downey has fashioned through many movies: irreverent, quirky, self-deprecating, wise-cracking. The fact that Downey is allowed to think and talk the way he does while wearing all that hardware represents a bold decision by the director, [Jon Favreau](#). REGISSEUR. If he hadn't desired that, he probably wouldn't have hired Downey. So comfortable is Downey with Tony Stark's dialogue, so familiar does it sound coming from him, that the screenplay seems almost to have been dictated by Downey's persona. SUBTILITEIT

There are some things that some actors can safely say onscreen, and other things they can't. The [Robert Downey Jr.](#) persona would find it difficult to get away with weighty, profound statements (in an "entertainment," anyway--a more serious film like "[Zodiac](#)" is another matter). Some superheroes speak in a kind of heightened, semi-formal prose, as if dictating to Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. Not Tony Stark. He could talk that way and be Juno's uncle. "[Iron Man](#)" doesn't seem to know how seriously most superhero movies take themselves. If there is wit in the dialog, the superhero is often supposed to be unaware of it. If there is broad humor, it usually belongs to the villain. What happens in "[Iron Man](#)," however, is that sometimes we wonder how seriously even Stark takes it. He's flippant in the face of disaster, casual on the brink of ruin.

It's prudent, I think, that Favreau positions the rest of the characters in a more serious vein. The supporting cast wisely does not try to one-up him **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. [Gwyneth Paltrow](#) plays Pepper Potts as a woman who is seriously concerned that this goofball will kill himself. [Jeff Bridges](#) makes Obadiah Stane one of the great superhero villains by seeming plausibly concerned about the stock price. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** [Terrence Howard](#), as Col. Rhodes, is at every moment a conventional straight arrow. What a horror show it would have been if they were all tuned to Tony Stark's sardonic wave length. We'd be back in the world of "[Swingers](#)" (1996) which was written by Favreau.

Another of the film's novelties is that the enemy is not a conspiracy or spy organization **ORIGINALITEIT**. It is instead the reality in our own world today: Armaments are escalating beyond the ability to control them. In most movies in this genre, the goal would be to create bigger and better weapons. How unique that Tony Stark wants to disarm. It makes him a superhero who can think, reason and draw moral conclusions, instead of one who recites platitudes. **COMPLEXITEIT**

The movie is largely founded on its special effects. When somebody isn't talking, something is banging, clanging or laying rubber **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. The armored robotic suits utilized by Tony and Obadiah would upstage lesser actors than Downey and Bridges; it's surprising how much those two giant iron men seem to reflect the personalities of the men inside them. Everything they do is preposterous, of course, but they seem to be doing it, not the suits. Some of their moments have real grandeur--as when Tony tests his suit to see how high it will fly, and it finally falls back toward earth in a sequence that reminded me of a similar challenge in "[The Right Stuff](#)" **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. The art direction is inspired by the original Marvel artists **CONTEXT CBA**. The movie doesn't reproduce the drawings of Jack Kirby and others, but it reproduces their feeling, a vision of out-scale enormity, seamless sleekness, secret laboratories made not of nuts and bolts but of...vistas.

A lot of big budget f/x epics seem to abandon their stories with half an hour to go, and just throw effects at the audience. This one has a plot so ingenious it continues to function no matter how loud the impacts, how enormous the explosions **COMPLEXITEIT**. It's an inspiration to provide Tony with that heart-saving device; he's vulnerable not simply because Obadiah might destroy him, but because he might simply run out of juice.

That leaves us, however, with a fundamental question at the bottom of the story: Why must the ultimate weapon be humanoid in appearance? Why must it have two arms and two legs, and why does it matter if its face is scowling? In the real-world competitions between fighting machines, all the elements of design are based entirely on questions of how well they allow the machines to attack, defend, recover, stay upright, and overturn their enemies **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. It is irrelevant whether they have conventional eyes, or whether those eyes narrow. Nor does it matter whether they have noses, because their oxygen supply is obviously not obtained by breathing.

The solution to such dilemmas is that the armored suits look the way they do for entirely cinematic reasons. The bad iron man should look like a mean machine. The good iron man should utilize the racing colors of Tony Stark's favorite sports cars. It wouldn't be nearly as much fun to see a fight scene between two refrigerators crossed with the leftovers from a boiler room. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

At the end of the day it's [Robert Downey Jr.](#) who powers the lift-off separating this from most other superhero movies. You hire an actor for his strengths, and Downey would not be strong as a one-dimensional mighty-man. He is strong because he is smart, quick and funny, and because we sense his public persona masks deep private wounds. By building on that, Favreau found his movie, and it's a good one.

Review 2: 'Iron Man' sizzles

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
Friday, May 2, 2008
San Francisco Chronicle

"Iron Man" is an action sci-fi blockbuster extravaganza that provides cartoon thrills for thinking people. It's the best movie of its kind since the second "Spider-Man" movie four years ago.

VERGELIJKING FILMS

Getting the suit right is easy. Getting the man underneath the suit right - that was the challenge, and the filmmakers rose to it. Robert Downey Jr. - cynical, witty, blithe, covering up some underlying vulnerability with a smoke screen of banter - is an ideal Iron Man and an ideal actor to place at the center of this story. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** With Downey there, the whole movie is a blast. When the action is fast and furious, there's the fun of spectacle **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, and in the calmer moments, there's Downey, whose dialogue is essentially a series of deadpan one-liners. That the whole movie feels ad-libbed is in fact a tribute to Downey either way. To the extent it's ad-libbed, it's evidence of his wit. To the extent it isn't, is evidence of the place he has come to occupy in our movies, that his casting should automatically inspire the screenwriters (Mark Fergus, Hawk Ostby, Art Marcum and Matt Holloway) to come up with Robert Downey-type lines: "Give me a Scotch, I'm starving."

Director Jon Favreau **REGISSEUR** is smart enough to let Downey puncture the pomposity of the sci-fi genre, but he's also smart enough to meet the genre's demands. The action is big, high-stakes and not played for laughs. The fact that the spectacle has its basis in character, and that Downey is such a likable presence, makes the action scenes all the more effective. This time, it's personal - for the audience, too.

The movie tells a story grounded in real world 2008. The scene is Afghanistan, and Tony Stark (Downey), a billionaire arms dealer, is coming back from a successful demonstration of his latest weapon (missiles that flatten mountains, thus making it difficult for terrorists to hide in caves). He's chatting with soldiers in an armored truck, when the bad guys attack, and he's taken hostage.

The Iron Man suit is the product of necessity. The terrorists give Stark the equipment to reproduce the superweapon - they want it for themselves. But he tricks them, and instead of building missiles, he builds an armored suit that shoots fire, bullets and missiles and that flies through jet propulsion. He comes back from the experience a changed man, a pacifist, but not a boring pacifist. He's willing to kill everybody it takes to defend his pacifism.

At their worst, comic book heroes translate into flat cartoon characters in movies. But at their best, comic book characters have what Spider-Man has, and what Stark has, as well - a neurotic, forlorn eccentricity that's very distinct to the whole comic book thing. **COMPLEXITEIT - SUBTILITEIT** Stark has great frustrations. He's brilliant. He's essentially a loner. He's full of inner stress, and this makes him into a pressure cooker whose eruption will take the form of flamboyant action.

There's an element of social commentary at work in this. You want to know how irrational the world is? It's so irrational that the most rational response a concerned genius can come up with is to perfect an iron suit and get into fantastic sky battles. **INTERPRETATIE** - and fantastic they are. For all of the movie's wit, "Iron Man" delivers on the spectacle, with Iron Man dodging jet fighters in one scene and going head-to-head against an even stronger Iron Man in another. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** Along the way, there's the kick of watching Stark develop the Iron Man suit in his basement laboratory - a funny, slapstick process of getting the bugs out. **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**

Gwyneth Paltrow plays Stark's personal assistant, and she turns out to be exactly the co-star Downey needs - sincere where he's arch, but someone with the sensitive awareness to grasp what he's *really* saying, as well as the humor to appreciate how he says it. Jeff Bridges, as Stark's business partner, sports some atypical facial topiary for this adventure. His head is shaved bald and he has a gray beard, and though he does a lot of smiling in the early scenes, something about him (besides the hair) just isn't reassuring. Bridges has mastered an art perfected by Kris Kristofferson: **He knows how to grin merrily while keeping his eyes cold as death.** **SUBTILITEIT – FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Review 3:

Heavy Suit, Light Touches

New York Times

By A. O. SCOTT

Published: May 2, 2008

The world at the moment does not suffer from a shortage of superheroes. And yet in some ways the glut of anti-evil crusaders with cool costumes and troubled souls takes the pressure off of "Iron Man," which clanks into theaters today ahead of Hellboy, Batman and the Incredible Hulk. This summer those guys are all in sequels or redos, so Iron Man (a Marvel property not to be confused with the Man of Steel, who belongs to DC and who's taking a break this year) has the advantage of novelty in addition to a seasonal head start. **CONTEXT**

CBA

And "Iron Man," directed by Jon Favreau **REGISSEUR** ("Elf," "Zathura"), has the advantage of being an unusually good superhero picture. Or at least — since it certainly has its problems **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** — a superhero movie that's good in unusual ways. The film benefits from a script (credited to Mark Fergus, Hawk Ostby, Art Marcum and Matt Holloway) that generally chooses clever dialogue over manufactured catchphrases and lumbering exposition, and also from a crackerjack cast that accepts the filmmakers' invitation to do some real acting rather than just flex and glower and shriek for a paycheck. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

There's some of that too, of course. The hero must flex and furrow his brow; the bad guy must glower and scheme; the girl must shriek and fret. There should also be a skeptical but supportive friend. Those are the rules of the genre, as unbreakable as the pseudoscientific principles that explain everything (An arc reactor! Of course!) and the Law of the Bald Villain **ORIGINALITEIT**. In "Iron Man" it all plays out more or less as expected, from the trial-and-error building of the costume to the climactic showdown, with lots of flying, chasing and noisemaking in between. (I note that there is one sharp, subversive surprise right at the very end.)

What is less expected is that Mr. Favreau, somewhat in the manner of those sly studio-era craftsmen who kept their artistry close to the vest so the bosses wouldn't confiscate it **GEBRUIK**

HAT, wears the genre paradigm as a light cloak rather than a suit of iron ORIGINALITEIT.

Instead of the tedious, moralizing, pop-Freudian origin story we often get in the first installments of comic-book-franchise movies — childhood trauma; identity crisis; longing for justice versus thirst for revenge; wake me up when the explosions start — "Iron Man" plunges us immediately into a world that crackles with character and incident.

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

It is not quite the real world, but it's a bit closer than Gotham or Metropolis. We catch up with Tony Stark in dusty Afghanistan, where he is enjoying a Scotch on the rocks in the back of an armored American military vehicle. Tony is a media celebrity, a former [M.I.T.](#) whiz kid and the scion of a family whose company makes and sells high-tech weaponry. He's also a bon vivant and an incorrigible playboy. On paper the character is completely preposterous, but since Tony is played by [Robert Downey Jr.](#), he's almost immediately as authentic and familiar — as much fun, as much trouble — as your ex-boyfriend or your old college roommate. Yeah, that guy.

Tony's skeptical friend (see above) is Rhodey, an Air Force officer played with good-humored sidekick weariness by [Terrence Howard](#). The girl is one Pepper Potts ([Gwyneth Paltrow](#), also in evident good humor), Tony's smitten, ultracompetent assistant. His partner and sort-of mentor in Stark Enterprises is Obadiah Stane, played by [Jeff Bridges](#) with wit and exuberance and — spoiler alert! — a shaved head.

These are all first-rate actors, and Mr. Downey's antic energy and emotional unpredictability bring out their agility and resourcefulness. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - COMPLEXITEIT Within the big, crowded movements of this pop symphony is a series of brilliant duets that sometimes seem to have the swing and spontaneity of jazz improvisation: Mr. Downey and Ms. Paltrow on the dance floor; Mr. Downey and Mr. Howard drinking sake on an airplane; Mr. Downey and Shaun Toub working on blueprints in a cave; Mr. Downey and Mr. Bridges sparring over a box of pizza.

Those moments are what you are likely to remember. The plot is serviceable, which is to say that it's placed at the service of the actors COMPLEXITEIT (and the special-effects artists FOCUS SPEKTAKEL), who deftly toss it around and sometimes forget it's there. One important twist seems glaringly arbitrary and unmotivated, but this lapse may represent an act of carefree sabotage rather than carelessness. You know this ostensibly shocking revelation is coming, and the writers know you know it's coming, so why worry too much about whether it makes sense? Similarly, the patina of POSITIEF/NEGATIEF geopolitical relevance is worn thin and eventually discarded, and Tony's crisis of conscience when he discovers what his

weapons are being used for is more of a narrative convenience than a real moral theme.

INTERPRETATIE

All of which is to say that "Iron Man," in spite of the heavy encumbrances Tony must wear when he turns into the title character, is distinguished by light touches and grace notes. The hardware is impressive, don't get me wrong, but at these prices it had better be. If you're throwing around a hundred million dollars and you have Batman and the Hulk on your tail, you had better be sure that the arc reactors are in good working order and that the gold-titanium alloy suit gleams like new and flies like a bird.

And everything works pretty well. But even dazzling, computer-aided visual effects, these days, are not so special **SUBLITEIT**. And who doesn't have superpowers? Actually, Iron Man doesn't; his heroism is all handicraft, elbow grease and applied intelligence. Those things account for the best parts of "Iron Man" as well.

Review 4:

Smart, high-concept popcorn movie

By **AMY BIANCOLLI** Copyright

Houston Chronicle

01-05-2008

"I'm just not the hero type," confesses Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), a zillionaire party-boy who assumes the clanking guise of Iron Man.

Stark, a weapons maker, is a blithe and unconflicted player in the military-industrial complex who defines "peace" as "havin' a bigger stick than the other guy." He demonstrates this belief by launching his latest big stick, a super-missile that spawns baby missiles in flight, into a broad ridge of Afghan mountains, blowing them all to hell.

The American military brass are impressed. Then, cue the irony, Tony gets attacked with his own munitions by a band of rebel fighters, who give him a fresh new perspective on the war machine. Anyone familiar with *Iron Man* mythology knows that the wounded Tony, held captive and told to produce weaponry for the bad guys, instead joins with the physicist Yinsen (Shaun Toub) to assemble an entire metal suit outfitted with jet-powered boots and other fabulous accessories **CONTEXT CBA**. He shoulders the mantle of superheroism not through mutant genes or extraterrestrial body chemistry but through his own, swinging, innovative genius. Necessity is the mother of invention.

Was an *Iron Man* movie strictly necessary? Did Jon Favreau have to invent it **REGISSEUR**? Probably not. There are plenty of other flawed-avenger movies in circulation or soon to be (next up: *The Dark Knight*), **VERGELIJKING FILMS** and audiences might have had their fill of large-scale robotic combat in last summer's *Transformers*. But *Iron Man* is a special case, because Tony Stark doesn't need the suit to make him cool - he already is, with his downtown facial hair and babe-magnet charm **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. In this cheerful cinematic imagining **GEBRUIK HAT**, he's neither Clark Kent-nerdy nor Bruce Wayne-reclusive. He's just wicked rich and wicked smart.

Granted, he's bummed about his weapons falling into the wrong hands. Having escaped his captors in his newfangled, super-powered armor, Tony heads home and announces to the press that he's given up arms manufacturing for good. This piques the ire of his business partner, the magnificently bald Obadiah Stane (Jeff Bridges, uncorking gale-force personality

swings), and worries his devoted assistant, the long-suffering Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow). They probably love each other, but you know how that goes.

Tony's Iron Man suit morphs through various permutations that more or less echo its (and his) evolution in the original Marvel series, in which he changed over time from an uncomplicated Gable-esque bachelor to an irresponsible, teetering alcoholic. In 1963, CONTEXT CBA Afghanistan was Viet Nam; Stark was anti-Commie; his cutting-edge military technology involved "midget transistors" that freakily presaged the microchip.

In the urtext, Tony had to recharge his chest piece in a wall socket to keep his heart beating. These days, he employs a "miniaturized arc reactor," a round, bluish gizmo wedged into his sternum that glows like a small rose window in a church at sunset - a curiously spiritual effect COMPLEXITEIT. Otherwise, Downey sashays through *Iron Man* with his chesty, swaybacked gait, giving Tony Stark the odd and not-unappealing look of a dissolute nightclub proprietor. The multiply authored screenplay too often devolves into clichés ORIGINALITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF (He: "Just do it!" She: "You'll die!!" He: "Push it!!!"), but Downey teases out the comedy wherever it lies, giving this straight-up comic-book flick a dose of tweaked detachment: *Iron Man* HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID.

After 2003's *Elf* and 2005's *Zathura*, Favreau has now made three smart, family-friendly, high-concept popcorn movies. This is a good niche for him; he brings a gee-whillikers love of genre storytelling and a solid grip on character. This first *Iron Man* film (from that revelation at the end, I'm betting it's not the last) is a simple, start-to-finish origin story in which Tony gets wounded, Tony builds suit, Tony takes suit on nocturnal test flights set to generic musclehead-guitar riffs. But it's fun to watch him whoosh through the sky, and fun to watch him crash - this smartypants inventor with the super-powered get-up. Typical hero or not. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 5:

Flash in the can

By Wesley Morris, Globe Staff
05/02/2008

Boston Globe

As the playboy-turned-heavy-metal superhero, Robert Downey Jr. brings 'Iron Man' to life

As you might expect, "Iron Man" is an elemental affair. The ear for dialogue is tin. The directing contains lead. The gases released are mostly sulfuric (although a few of them turn out to be noble). And it all mixes to form that complex compound whose formula we know by heart: the superhero blockbuster. I liked "Iron Man," but the I-know-it-by-heart part makes it somewhat resistible POSITIEF/NEGATIEF. It's entertainment out of a jar. ORIGINALITEIT

Even though the movie makes an admirable bid for political topicality by retrofitting the struggles of its Marvel Comics hero for our current wars INTERPRETATIE – CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK, and even though the fantastic Robert Downey Jr. plays our slutty, metallic superhero, there's a sameness to it that makes the entire enterprise seem obligatory. Close your eyes, and it's "Superman Begins: Rise of the Silver Daredevil 3. VERGELIJKING FILMS" Even the hard rock of the film's score sounds like heavy Muzak.

Downey is Tony Stark, a billionaire playboy, brilliant scientist, and extremely successful weapons manufacturer who lives in a sleek modernist fortress on a seaside cliff. On a trip to

introduce a new slate of weapons in Afghanistan, Tony is kidnapped and locked for three months in a cave, by terrorists who demand that he replicate one of his designs. Instead, with his helper, Yinsen (Shaun Toub), he builds a giant iron suit and throws the insurgents around.

Tony returns to America appalled at the reach of his military-industrial success and decides to stop selling weapons. How he could not have known he was doing such a bang-up job as a warmonger is a mystery. But his about-face might have something to do with the glowing electromagnetic amulet in his chest keeping his heart clear of shrapnel left by a bomb his kidnapers set to trap him. Tony's a big softie now, ready, even, to consider real love with his assistant, "Pepper" Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow). Meanwhile, shares in Stark Industries plummet, and Tony's stupendously bald partner, Obadiah Stane (Jeff Bridges), pushes him aside to restore profitability.

What we have in parts of "Iron Man" is a nifty critique of corporate amorality **INTERPRETATIE**, with remorseful Tony bound to square off against heartless Obadiah. Indeed the film's supervillain is a double-dealing big-business titan. But the most interesting action sequence requires Iron Man to save an Afghan village from the terrorists who threaten to tear families apart. **It's cheesy and absurd (Iron Man has a lot of RoboCop in him)** **VERGELIJKING FILMS - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. It's also effective. The international humanitarianism acknowledges that the sky sometimes falls in places other than New York.

So kudos to the actor-director Jon Favreau **REGISSEUR** and his four credited screenwriters for trying to raise the blockbuster consciousness, although most of the good and excellent superhero films have politics or allegory on their minds (even that last, execrable "Fantastic Four" movie gave us a waterboarding sequence). **"Iron Man" isn't remotely as adventurous as the Marvel series, which debuted in 1968, and which has had Tony Stark wrestle with alcoholism, Communism, Vietnam, and destructive misappropriations of the Iron Man armor** **CONTEXT CBA** - a few years ago going so far as to accept a secretary of defense appointment to do so.

Favreau and his team know they have to entertain us, too. But rather than craft a sci-fi action-drama out of geopolitics, **they spray the movie with Teflon and complete a checklist: Cool toys? Here. Expensive effects? Check. SPEKTAKEL Damsel with a twist of distress? Yup. Climactic nighttime brawl straight out of "Superman II" (but badly staged)? Got it. Incoherent plot? You bet** **COMPLEXITEIT**. Some activity for Terrence Howard, who plays Jim Rhodes, Tony's Air Force-commander best friend, besides talking to Tony on phones? OK, they missed one.

Favreau is actually best in "Swingers" mode, when, say, the camera pulls back from Downey and Howard and reveals that what we think is a nightclub party is actually a strip joint on Stark's private jet. You half-expect Vince Vaughn to erupt from the cockpit.

Otherwise, Howard, Paltrow, and Bridges are in purely functional positions. It's odd seeing Paltrow gloss her way through what is basically an ingenue part - **the sort of role that has enough to it to warrant a smart actor but not enough to keep you from noticing that Paltrow can do anything convincingly except stand around and be helpless.** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

I swear I saw her check her watch once. Bridges undercooks his part, as if he's warming up to the idea of embodying evil. His bald head is consistently arresting. I wanted to crack it open and make an omelet.

But the movie is ultimately distinguished by its star. Either through uncertainty or misdirection, actors who play superheroes tend to let the technical departments steal the show. Out of their suits, the Christian Bales of the world still seem masked. Downey appears to like all this make-believe. Even the clunky dialogue sounds witty out of his mouth. This is not a part that makes great demands on his talent, and his slummy approach to it is amusing. FOCUS

ACTEURS TALENT

Downey could have taken a tragic tack. But he has fun just figuring out how to make the armor suit work. His sarcasm and almost drunken Tony Curtis body language transform the scenes of Iron Man flame-throwing or flying around: You believe it's Downey in there. SUBTILITEIT. And in case you don't, the cinematographer Matthew Libatique gives us Martin Schoeller-like images of the actor's face and eyes aglow beneath equipment and graphics. For such a standard, clumsy picture, the beauty in those shots is ludicrous. You expect to see a bunch of circuitry, and you get a flash of soul. SUBTILITEIT

5 offline reviews: The incredible Hulk

Review 1:

Hulk is green with anger

By AMY BIANCOLLI

June 12, 2008

Houston Chronicle

Before we delve too deeply into the Freudian psychology of the Hulk, just remember: He's a huge green monster. He has trapezius muscles up to his eyeballs, which also are green. When he speaks, he does so in concise, unadorned descriptives on the order of "Rrrrrgh! Hulk! Smash!"

But the Hulk, for all his hugeness and greenness and monster-ness, is also a metaphor for our eternal human rage and how we cope with it. **INTERPRETATIE** When Stan Lee and Jack Kirby first hatched him in 1962, he was talkier and nocturnal — he reverted back to normal when the sun came up — but he was still a mild-mannered scientist with Gamma ray poisoning and an especially ugly temper **CONTEXT CBA**. Though the hows and what-nows of his situation have changed over the years, the essential struggle remains: to understand and control the rampaging beastie within.

Comic book fans may remember, or want to forget, Ang Lee's 2003 origin story, *Hulk*, which split time between Bruce Banner's Daddy issues and way-out-there visual effects. I rather liked it, but I grasp why others didn't. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Most movie goers just aren't that into repressed memory **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**. By contrast, this new twist on Hulk mythology — not quite a sequel, though it picks up more or less where the first left off — takes a behavioral approach. It cares not a whit for the poor wee Hulk's psychiatric troubles.

Instead, *The Incredible Hulk* regards Bruce's volcanic metamorphoses into a 9-foot pea-green behemoth as just another anger-management problem. We now find the beleaguered Dr. Banner (Edward Norton) in a terraced Brazilian slum, where he studies jiu-jitsu breathing techniques intended to keep him calm and Hulk-free. Bruce wears a heart monitor on his wrist; when his pulse starts winging out of control, he closes his eyes and sort of Ooms himself back to normal.

Bruce is lonely: He misses his beloved Betty (Liv Tyler). Bruce is single-minded: He continues his search for a cure. Bruce is hunted: He's pursued by Betty's father, the intensely mustachioed General Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt), who aims to replicate his bio-chemistry and create a hulking super-soldier for the U.S. military.

Also intrigued by this idea is the abominable Emil Blonsky (Tim Roth), a nasty little warmonger who embarks on his own transformation into raging manimal. He is ridiculous. His lines are ridiculous. ("Something big hit us! It threw a forklift truck like a softball!") **ENTERTAINMENT** Most of the plot also is ridiculous, **COMPLEXITEIT** but the film moves quickly, believes devoutly in itself and cranks up the muscle-headed spectacle with just enough comic relief and character development to keep things grounded. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** And it benefits immensely from Norton, who treats the role with a straight face and an utter lack of pretension: This is *exactly* how a physicist would behave if, on a bad day, he exploded out of his pants **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**.

Written by Zak Penn (*X-Men: The Last Stand*) and Norton, *The Incredible Hulk* was directed by Louis Leterrier **REGISSEUR**, the action maestro behind those busy and brainless *Transporter* flicks. It pauses for humor (stretchy-waistband jokes) and romance, though there's only so much Dr. Banner can do in that department without triggering a hulk-mutation. The movie's effects are mostly earthbound — crashing, competent and riddled with gunfire. In close-up the Hulk is more cartoonish than scary, but when he's ripping armed vehicles to shreds? Kewl. **ENTERTAINEMNT**

A scene or two recalls *King Kong*; others invoke the wounded innocence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** There are cameos and inside jokes from within the Marvel universe, including tips of the hat to the old CBS TV series and a final scene that echoes the Avengers-teasing "easter egg" hidden at the end of *Iron Man*. But no need to sit

through the credits this time, because this green bogeyman isn't one to be coy. He's happy to give audiences what they want, so they can all growl together: Hulk! Smash! Box Office!

Review 2:

The Incredible Hulk

// / June 12, 2008

By Roger Ebert

Chicago Sun-Times

"The Incredible Hulk" is no doubt an ideal version of the Hulk saga for those who found [Ang Lee's "Hulk" \(2003\)](#) too talky, or dare I say, too thoughtful VOORSPELLING REACTIE. But not for me. It sidesteps the intriguing aspects of Hulkdom and spends way too much time in, dare I say, noisy and mindless action sequences COMPLEXITEIT. By the time the Incredible Hulk had completed his hulk-on-hulk showdown with the Incredible Blonsky, I had been using my Timex with the illuminated dial way too often.

Consider the dilemma of creating a story about the Hulk, who is one of the lesser creatures in the Marvel Comics stable CONTEXT CBA. You're dealing with two different characters: Mild-mannered scientist Dr. Bruce Banner, and the rampaging, destructive Hulk, who goes into frenzies of aggression whenever he's annoyed, which is frequently, because the Army is usually unloading automatic weapons into him. There is even the interesting question of whether Dr. Banner is really conscious inside the Hulk. In the [Ang Lee version](#), he was, more or less, and confessed to Betty Ross: "When it happens, when it comes over me, when I totally lose control ... I like it." VERGELIJKING FILMS In this version by Louis Leterrier, the best Banner ([Edward Norton](#)) can come up with is that being the Hulk is like a hyperthyroid acid trip, and all he can remember are fragments of moments.

It's obvious that the real story is the tragedy that Banner faces because of the Hulk-inducing substance in his blood. But if Banner never turned into the Hulk, nobody would ever make a movie about him. And if the Hulk were never Banner, he would be like Godzilla, who tears things up real good but is otherwise, dare I say, one-dimensional.

The [Ang Lee](#) version was rather brilliant in the way it turned the Hulk story into matching sets of parent-child conflicts: Betty Ross ([Jennifer Connelly](#)) was appalled by her father, the general ([Sam Elliott](#)), and Bruce Banner ([Eric Bana](#)) suffered at the hands of his father, a scientist who originally created the Hulk genes and passed them along to his child. ([Nick Nolte](#) had nice scenes as the elder Dr. Banner.)

In the new version, Betty ([Liv Tyler](#)) still has big problems with her father the general ([William Hurt](#)); she's appalled by his plans to harness the Hulk formula and create a race of super-soldiers. In both films, Banner and Ross are in love, but don't act on it because the Hulk business complicates things way too much, although I admit there's a clever moment in "[Hulk](#)" 2008 when Bruce interrupts his big chance to make love with Betty because when he gets too excited, COMPLEXITEIT he turns into the Hulk, and Betty is a brave girl but not that good of a sport.

Consider for a moment Gen. Ross' idea of turning out Hulk soldiers. They would be a drill sergeant's worst nightmare. When they weren't Hulks, why bother to train them? You'd only be using them in the fullness of their Hulkdom, and then how would you train them? Would you just drop thousands of Ed Nortons into enemy territory and count on them getting so excited by free-fall that they became Hulks? (This transformation actually happens to Banner in "[Hulk](#)" 2008, by the way, VERGELIJKING FILMS)

So, what's to like in "[The Incredible Hulk](#)"? POSITIEF/NEGATIEF We have a sound performance by [Edward Norton](#) FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT as a man who desperately does not want to

become the Hulk, and goes to Brazil to study under a master of breath control in order to curb his anger. And we have [Liv Tyler](#) in full trembling sympathy mode. Banner's Brazilian sojourn begins with an astonishing shot: From an aerial viewpoint, we fly higher and higher above one of the hills of Rio, seeing hundreds, thousands, of tiny houses built on top of one another, all clawing for air. **SUBTILITEIT**

This is the "[City of God](#)" neighborhood, and as nearly as I could tell, we are looking at the real thing, not CGI. The director lets the shot run on longer than any reasonable requirement of the plot; my bet is, he was as astonished as I was, and let it run because it is so damned amazing. The scenes involving Banner in Brazil are well conceived, although when he accidentally contaminates a bottled soft drink with his blood, the movie doesn't really deal with the consequences when the drink is consumed in the United States. The contamination provides Gen. Ross with his clue to Banner's whereabouts, and Army troops blast the hell out of the City of God; all through the movie, the general deploys his firepower so recklessly that you wonder if he has a superior, and if he ever has to account for the dozens, hundreds, thousands, who die while his guys are blasting at the Hulk with absolutely no effect.

Enter Emil Blonsky ([Tim Roth](#)), a Marine who Gen. Ross recruits because he's meaner and deadlier than anyone else. Blonsky leads the chase in Rio. Later, Dr. Samuel Sterns ([Tim Blake Nelson](#)), Banner's research associate, is forced to inject Blonsky with a little Hulkie juice, setting up a titanic rooftop battle in Harlem between Hulk and Blonsky. And this battle, as I have suggested, pounds away relentlessly, taking as its first victim our patience. "[Iron Man](#)," the much better spiritual partner of this film, also ends with a showdown between an original and a copycat, but it involves two opponents who know who they are and why they are fighting. **VERGELIJKING FILMS - SUBTILITEIT**

When you get down to it, as a fictional creature, the Incredible Hulk is as limited as a bad drunk. He may be fun to be around when he's sober, but when he drinks too much, you just feel sorry for the guy. **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Review 3:

In 'Hulk,' only the effects are special **SPEKTAKEL**

[Email](#) | Text size By Wesley Morris, Globe Staff
06/13/2008
Boston Globe

The movie studio might call him "The Incredible Hulk," but I came to think of him as Jose Canseco with an incredibly swampy tan. When Jose's not barreling through computer-enhanced Brazilian favelas and destroying most of Harlem in the finale of this flavorless contraption, he's sleeping deep down inside a lean, not-as-green Edward Norton. I must say I prefer his steroidal inner self.

Norton joins Robert Downey Jr. as the season's other very good actor time-sharing his part **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** with a crack special-effects department. In "[Iron Man](#)," Downey appeared to be having a flamboyantly good time. Norton is a drag. This is partly a matter of necessity. Lest he hulk out, Norton's character, Dr. Bruce Banner, must keep his heart rate low. The movie tallies for us Bruce's "days without incident" (158 when we meet him) and follows him miserably on the run from the government. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

This is all explained in a nifty, wordless opening sequence. The gist of what follows is that General "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt in a bad Sam Elliott mustache and a worse mood) is hot to catch Bruce and use his gamma-rich blood to start a race of supersoldiers. So as on the 1970s television series that, like the movie, was based on a Marvel Comics character, Bruce becomes a lonely fugitive.

Norton mopes through the part almost as much as Bill Bixby did on TV. It's hard to imagine Norton sitting around thinking, "I've got to get myself in a film that lets me play a scientist hiding as a drone in a soda factory for some scenes and as a pizza delivery boy for others. Then in the really good moments, a big, green monster makes them forget all about me." But that's what happens.

Whenever Liv Tyler is around, as Betty Ross, Bruce's lady love and the general's daughter, Norton gets to make moony faces. Tim Roth doesn't fare much better. He shows up as Blonsky, a British mercenary working for the general and eager for a taste of Bruce's power. Needless to say, he gets it and them some.

The effects crew does a lot of the heavy lifting. Indeed, all the stunts and effects look expensively impressive. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – FILM ALS PRODUCT.** That big uptown wrecking-ball climax is a rousing, if hectically edited, spectacle that pits the Hulk against the beast Blonsky becomes. In the comic, this creature was called the Abomination. Yet watching these two computer-generated behemoths go at it is a notch above watching a furious round of Mortal Kombat.

You may recall that we've been here before - just five years ago, in fact. The occasion was "Hulk," director Ang Lee's frigidly received approach to the same comic book, and, boy, does that movie seem ingenious by comparison. **VERGELIJKING** "Hulk" was a study in psychological stress that still holds up as a criminally underrated dual character profile. Aside from the halfhearted blockbuster showdowns, it was an art-movie with military ambushes.

INTERPRETATIE

"The Incredible Hulk" is a commercial rebuke to Lee's psycho-melodrama. The trouble with blockbusters now is that there's no room for the risks Lee took, however minimal they actually were. This rebooted Hulk has been made with minimal cinematic or psychological value and seems utterly terrified of exploring the Hulk's erotic possibilities. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT - SUBTILITEIT** Betty and Bruce make out, but stop when his heart speeds up, which makes you wonder: How many days without incident in that department?

Of course the movie does bring the green guy back into franchiseable planetary alignment within the Marvel Comics universe. If the coda doesn't promise better sequels in the future then it certainly hints at more synergistic ones.

For now there's a certain pleasure to be had in some of the physical blowouts. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF.** "The Incredible Hulk" has a fearsome playfulness when its giant star is slamming two hunks of car together like cymbals or bashing the Abomination's head into the

street SPANNING/SUSPENS - ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE. But the best thing in the movie is made of human flesh. It's Tim Blake Nelson, arriving late as a biology professor. He's the one scientist in the movie with a scientist's enthusiasm for discovery. Tyler, by comparison, plays her biologist like a woman running an art gallery.

Screenwriter Zak Penn knows his Marvel, and director Louis Leterrier REGISSEUR can certainly keep a fight sequence going forever (he made the two "Transporter" movies). But in their determination to make a reliable action movie, they forgot to make an interesting one. ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

Review 4:

The Incredible Hulk: More snack than movie meal

By [Peter Howell](#)

Fri Jun 13 2008
Toronto Star

The Incredible Hulk immediately informs us it's been 158 "days without incident" for Edward Norton's beastly alter ego, a revelation that elicits primal grunts from the savage reviewer.

A day without incident in a superhero movie is a day without bent metal, and that can't be good. Is this going to be like Ang Lee's 2003 monstrosity *Hulk*, which was all angst and little action? VERGELIJKING FILMS

Happily, director Louis Leterrier (*The Transporter*) gets back to comic-book basics REGISSEUR, delivering enough chases and smackdowns SPEKTAKEL with its all-new cast to satisfy many a fanboy VOORSPELLING REACTIE, despite some humdrum CGI work SUBTILITEIT.

Unhappily, POISTIEF/NEGATIEF the lack of character shading suggests Marvel Studios went too far in distancing itself from Lee's much-reviled predecessor COMPLEXITEIT. Could a better balance between brawn and brains not have been struck?

Reports of Norton's attempts to meddle with Zak Penn's script ring true, given the actor's predilection for deep and moody roles. It's also evident that Norton largely failed in his quest to add some intellectual and emotional weight to his green-skinned heavy FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. This *Hulk* ain't got no bulk.

The movie retells the origin story on the fly, but it's familiar to anyone who ever read the comic, saw Lee's movie or watched the 1978-82 TV series.

Norton's nutty scientist Bruce Banner bombarded himself with gamma rays that unleashed the bilious beast within. Hunted by the U.S. Army, in the person of cigar-chomping General "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt), Banner does what any sensible radioactive fugitive would do: he hides in a Brazilian slum and gets a job bottling lime-green soda pop.

In-between work shifts, Banner keeps busy in his makeshift lab trying to figure out how to separate the Hulk's DNA from his own.

He maintains a clandestine computer relationship, using the devilishly clever screen name "Mr. Green," with a distant egghead named Mr. Blue (Tim Blake Nelson) who promises to aid him in his quest.

(Blue provides a convenient excuse to relocate the action to North America, with Toronto once again masquerading as U.S. locales.)

Banner also pines for his lost love, a cellular biologist named Dr. Betty Ross (Liv Tyler), who looks like she's not really a scientist but just plays one in the movies.

Why Banner and Ross ever got together is hard to fathom, since there's more chemistry happening on one of their microscope slides than in their coupling. But she's the daughter of Thunderbolt Ross, and that's a real passion killer right there. **SUBTILITEIT**

So far, so poignant, but the main problem is our Hulky hero's lack of green *cojones*.

He only emerges from Banner's bod when the host gets excited, which Banner does everything he can to avoid – and that includes going anywhere past first base on date night.

Fortunately, the script presents another character who is happy to fill Hulk's size-37 shoes. He's career soldier Emil Blonsky (Tim Roth), a zap off the ol' Thunderbolt, who makes up for his physical shortcomings with outsized ambitions.

Blonsky wants to be a super soldier, so he volunteers to be jacked full of the same gamma rays that turned Banner into "a whole new level of weird." He calls his new beast The Abomination because Hulk Hogan was already taken.

You might guess that the "days without incident" counter is going back to zero, and it will all be set to Craig Armstrong's stentorian score. But instead of grandly naming this picture *The Incredible Hulk*, it should more truthfully have been called *The Adequate Hulk*.

While superior to its cerebral predecessor – give me "Hulk, smash!" any day over "I Hulk, therefore I am," – the movie is at best a tasty snack rather than a satisfying meal.

ENTERTAINMENT

Urban geographers and funk enthusiasts will delight at the climactic showdown on Toronto's Yonge St., which magically places Harlem's famed Apollo Theatre just two doors down from dearly departed Sam the Record Man's, and right near The Big Slice pizzeria and the Zanzibar Tavern.

Has the world suddenly gotten smaller, or just a little less real? Sadly, it's the latter, and you'll really notice the fakery in the monster department. The characters of both Hulk and the Abomination look like oversized plastic action figures, a poor substitute for the good actors they hide, Norton and Roth. **SUBTILITEIT**

But at least they're engaged in some serious "incidents," to use the movie's poncey euphemism.

The Incredible Hulk, finally, is just like Toronto's road maintenance crews: if all else fails in getting people's attention, just rip up Yonge St.

Review 5:

Caution: Contents Turn Angry When Shaken

By A. O. SCOTT
New York Times
Published: June 13, 2008

Five years ago there was a movie about Dr. Bruce Banner, a scientist who, when agitated, turns large and green. It was called "[Hulk](#)" and it didn't do very well, either with critics or with the legions of comic-book fans expected to sacrifice a portion of their pocket money every summer to keep the movie studios afloat. Now Universal and Marvel, every bit as indomitable as their rampaging asparagus-colored intellectual property, have given the franchise another try. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The new movie about poor Dr. Banner, directed by Louis Leterrier **REGISSEUR** ("[The Transporter](#)," "[Transporter 2](#)") from a script by Zak Penn ("[X2](#)," "[X-Men: The Last Stand](#)"), is called "[The Incredible Hulk](#)." But let's not get carried away: "The Adequate Hulk" would have been a more suitable title. There are some big, thumping fights and a few bright shards of pop-cultural wit, but for the most part this movie seems content to aim for the generic mean **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. If you really need a superhero to tide you over until Hellboy and Batman resurface next month — and honestly, do you? really? why? — I guess this big green dude will do. **VOORSPELLIGN REACTIE**

The latest Hulk, a computer-generated behemoth with torn pants and tousled hair, is a slightly improved version of the character created by [Stan Lee](#) and Jack Kirby 46 years ago **CONTEXT CBA**, though a cameo appearance by Lou Ferrigno, the Hulk on the old television series, may induce some fond nostalgia for the analog days when a superhero could be impersonated by an actual person. When calm, Bruce Banner is played, in "The Incredible Hulk," by [Edward Norton](#), who emphasizes the character's somber, cerebral side. To avoid

turning green and bursting out of his clothes, Bruce must keep his pulse low, and Mr. Norton, ever the professional, is careful not to do anything too exciting.

The origin story, dwelled upon at great length in "Hulk," is here telescoped into a neat little montage that accompanies the opening titles. Bruce was conducting research for the Army under the supervision of a cigar-smoking general ([William Hurt](#)), whose daughter, Betty ([Liv Tyler](#)), was Bruce's girlfriend. The experiment went horribly wrong and Bruce escaped to Brazil, where he lives with his dog in a hillside slum and works at a soda factory.

"Get our agents to look for a white man in that bottling plant!" the general barks when he learns of Bruce's whereabouts. Though Brazil is home to millions of people who might fit the general's description, the military has no trouble finding Bruce's modest little home. A member of the squad sent to bring him in — the general wants Bruce's data for further study, you see — is a hard case named Blonsky ([Tim Roth](#)) who you know will turn out to be the Hulk's nemesis even before he shoots Bruce's dog. In the meantime, after Bruce's pulse rate spikes, the Hulk is glimpsed through the murk of night-vision goggles and in shadow, smoke and soda-pop vapor.

The creature looks better that way than he does when, a while later, he emerges in the light of day to smash up some government hardware on a Virginia college campus. Though the Hulk's distended muscles are impressively veined — he looks less rubbery, and therefore more credible, than his precursor in "Hulk" **VERGELIJKING FILMS - SUBTILITEIT** — the scale and proportion of his body don't seem quite right. His head is weirdly small, and his size in relation to other people and objects appears to fluctuate. Also, why is his hair so much darker than Mr. Norton's?

That there is no resemblance between them is perhaps to be expected, but it also exposes a genetic flaw that makes "The Incredible Hulk" less interesting **COMPLEXITEIT** — clumsier, more brutish — than many of its comic-book-derived counterparts. Superhero movies depend not only on virtuosic special effects or action set pieces, but also, perhaps even more, **on the psychological drama of existential division.** **COMPLEXITEIT** The mild-mannered reporter is also the man of steel; the reclusive millionaire dons mask and cape to fight evil.

The better superhero performances explore the tensions inherent in their protagonists' double lives. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** [Tobey Maguire](#)'s Peter Parker is first liberated and then burdened by the demands of being Spider-Man. The various X-Men grapple with the social and emotional challenges of mutant-hood. More recently, [Robert Downey Jr.](#) used the ethical predicaments of Iron Man as the basis for a brilliantly complicated and unpredictable characterization. But the contradictions and continuities between Bruce Banner and the monster he becomes figure surprisingly little in "The Incredible Hulk." **VERGELIJKING FILMS** When Betty asks Bruce

what the transformation feels like he answers that the Hulk “isn’t me,” and in taking this disavowal at face value the movie sacrifices opportunities for pathos as well as humor.

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

A few such possibilities are hinted at. The blood-pressure thing makes Bruce afraid of having sex (though Betty seems somewhat intrigued by the idea), and Mr. Norton does a credible enough job of conveying how tiresome it must be to shred your shoes and clothes. But without a vivid, complex character at the center of the movie, even the more inspired bits — [Tim Blake Nelson](#)’s tenured mad scientist, a climactic battle on the streets of Harlem — feel perfunctory and familiar ORIGINALITEIT. A middling superhero movie! I wish I could say that was incredible.

5 offline reviews: The Dark Knight

Review 1: The New York Times

door: Manohla Dargis
17-07-2008

Showdown in Gotham Town

Dark as night and nearly as long, Christopher Nolan's new Batman movie feels like a beginning and something of an end. Pitched at the divide between art and industry, poetry and entertainment, it goes darker and deeper than any Hollywood movie of its comic-book kind — including "Batman Begins," Mr. Nolan's 2005 pleurably moody resurrection of the series — largely by embracing an ambivalence that at first glance might be mistaken for pessimism. But no work filled with such thrilling moments of pure cinema can be rightly branded pessimistic, even a postheroic superhero movie like "The Dark Knight."

Film: Batman's Burden: A Director Confronts Darkness and Death (March 9, 2008)

Apparently, truth, justice and the American way don't cut it anymore. That may not fully explain why the last Superman took a nose dive ("Superman Returns," if not for long), but I think it helps get at why, like other recent ambiguous American heroes, both supermen and super-spies, the new Batman soared. Talent played a considerable part in Mr. Nolan's Bat restoration, naturally, as did his seriousness of purpose. He brought a gravitas to the superhero that wiped away the camp and kitsch that had shrouded Batman in cobwebs. It helped that Christian Bale, a reluctant smiler whose sharply planed face looks as if it had been carved with a chisel, slid into Bruce Wayne's insouciance as easily as he did Batman's suit.

The new Batman movie isn't a radical overhaul like its predecessor, which is to be expected of a film with a large price tag (well north of \$100 million) and major studio expectations (worldwide domination or bust). Instead, like other filmmakers who've successfully reworked genre staples, Mr. Nolan has found a way to make Batman relevant to his time — meaning, to ours — investing him with shadows that remind you of the character's troubled beginning but without lingering mustiness. That's nothing new, but what is surprising, actually startling, is that in "The Dark Knight," which picks up the story after the first film ends, Mr. Nolan has turned Batman (again played by the sturdy, stoic Mr. Bale) into a villain's sidekick.

That would be the Joker, of course, a demonic creation and three-ring circus of one wholly inhabited by Heath Ledger. Mr. Ledger died in January at age 28 from an accidental overdose, after principal photography ended, and his death might have cast a paralyzing pall over the film if the performance were not so alive. But his Joker is a creature of such ghastly life, and the performance is so visceral, creepy and insistently present that the characterization pulls you in almost at once. When the Joker enters one fray with a murderous flourish and that sawed-off smile, his morbid grin a mirror of the Black Dahlia's ear-to-ear grimace, your nervous laughter will die in your throat. PART GEVOEL

A self-described agent of chaos, the Joker arrives in Gotham abruptly, as if he'd been hiding up someone's sleeve. He quickly seizes control of the city's crime syndicate and Batman's attention with no rhyme and less reason. Mr. Ledger, his body tightly wound but limbs jangling, all but disappears under the character's white mask and red leer. Licking and chewing his sloppy, smeared lips, his tongue darting in and out of his mouth like a jittery animal, he turns the Joker into a tease who taunts criminals (Eric Roberts's bad guy, among them) and the police (Gary Oldman's good cop), giggling while he-he-he (ha-ha-ha) tries to burn the world down. He isn't fighting for anything or anyone. He isn't a terrorist, just terrifying.

Mr. Nolan is playing with fire here, but partly because he's a showman. Even before the Joker goes wild, the director lets loose with some comic horror that owes something to Michael Mann's "Heat," something to Cirque de Soleil, and quickly sets a tense, coiled mood that he sustains for two fast-moving hours of freakish mischief, vigilante justice, philosophical asides and the usual trinkets and toys, before a final half-hour pileup of gunfire and explosions. This big-bang finish — which includes a topsy-turvy image that poignantly suggests the world has been turned on its axis for good — is sloppy, at times visually incoherent, yet touching. Mr. Nolan, you learn, likes to linger in the dark, but he doesn't want to live there.

Though entranced by the Joker, Mr. Nolan, working from a script he wrote with his brother Jonathan Nolan, does make room for romance and tears and even an occasional (nonlethal) joke. There are several new characters, notably Harvey Dent (a charismatic Aaron Eckhart), a crusading district attorney and Bruce Wayne's rival for the affection of his longtime friend, Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal, a happy improvement over Katie Holmes). Like almost every other character in the film, Batman and Bruce included, Harvey and Rachel live and work in (literal) glass houses. The Gotham they inhabit is shinier and brighter than the antiqued dystopia of "Batman Begins": theirs is the emblematic modern megalopolis (in truth, a cleverly disguised Chicago), soulless, anonymous, a city of distorting and shattering mirrors.

From certain angles, the city the Joker threatens looks like New York, but it would be reductive to read the film too directly through the prism of 9/11 and its aftermath. You may flash on that day when a building collapses here in a cloud of dust, or when firemen douse some flames, but those resemblances belong more rightly to our memories than to what we see unfolding on screen. Like any number of small- and big-screen thrillers, the film's engagement with 9/11 is diffuse, more a matter of inference and ideas (chaos, fear, death) than of direct assertion. Still, that a spectacle like this even glances in that direction confirms that American movies have entered a new era of ambivalence when it comes to their heroes — or maybe just superness.

In and out of his black carapace and on the restless move, Batman remains, perhaps not surprisingly then, a recessive, almost elusive figure. Part of this has to do with the costume, which has created complications for every actor who wears it. With his eyes dimmed and voice technologically obscured, Mr. Bale, who's suited up from the start, doesn't have access to an actor's most expressive tools. (There are only so many ways to eyeball an enemy.) Mr. Nolan, having already told Batman's origin story in the first film, initially doesn't appear motivated to advance the character. Yet by giving him rivals in love and war, he has also shifted Batman's demons from inside his head to the outside world.

That change in emphasis leaches the melodrama from Mr. Nolan's original conception, but it gives the story tension and interest beyond one man's personal struggle. This is a darker Batman, less obviously human, more strangely other. When he perches over Gotham on the edge of a skyscraper roof, he looks more like a gargoyle than a savior. There's a touch of demon in his stealthy menace. During a crucial scene, one of the film's saner characters asserts that this isn't a time for heroes, the implication being that the moment belongs to villains and madmen. Which is why, when Batman takes flight in this film, his wings stretching across the sky like webbed hands, it's as if he were trying to possess the world as much as save it.

In its grim intensity, "The Dark Knight" can feel closer to David Fincher's "Zodiac" than Tim Burton's playfully gothic "Batman," which means it's also closer to Bob Kane's original comic and Frank Miller's 1986 reinterpretation. That makes it heavy, at times almost pop-Wagnerian, but Mr. Ledger's performance and the film's visual beauty are transporting. (In Imax, it's even more operatic.) No matter how cynical you feel about Hollywood, it is hard not to fall for a film that makes room for a shot of the Joker leaning out the window of a stolen police car

and laughing into the wind, the city's colored lights gleaming behind him like jewels. He's just a clown in black velvet, but he's also some kind of masterpiece.

Review 2:

This Joker Holds All the Cards

Heath Ledger's Clown Gives 'The Dark Knight' Its Power **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

By Stephen Hunter

Washington Post

July 17, 2008

Handsome is as handsome doesn't in "The Dark Knight." Of the three male lookers who dominate it, who would have guessed that the one with his face hidden behind twisted clown makeup, whose perfect features and fair brow are not glimpsed even once, would prove the most memorable?

This Story

This is not because Heath Ledger died in January **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**, though that event does perhaps add some otherwise unearned melancholy to the film. It's because Ledger's performance is so intense and so lasting; it's because despite the insane mask, it's a subtle, nuanced piece of acting so powerful it banishes all memories of the handsome Aussie behind it. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** The makeup seems to have liberated him: He's supple of body, expressive with only his eyes, and his voice has undulations of irony and mockery and psychopathology to it. **SUBTILITEIT** He's an essay -- in a way he's never before been, playing straight-faced characters -- in pure charisma **GEBRUIK HAT**.

The performance is also the most interesting thing in the film, and when the Joker is absent, "The Dark Knight" loses most of its energy and dynamism and becomes nothing but a pretty-boy face-off between Christian Bale and Aaron Eckhart. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

It's too bad, because the movie begins and plays for a long time with a great deal of intensity, particularly as it pits the bat guy against the smiler **SPANNING/SUSPENS**. It begins with bangs, lots of them. A bank job, very violent (you think you're in a remake of "Heat") transpires, **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – VERGELIJKING FILMS** in which a squad of clown-masked pros takes down what is quickly revealed to be a Mafia operation, overloaded with unreported cash.

But even as the bank robbers are bringing off their meticulous plans, they are being hunted: That's because one of them, under his clown mask, is wearing clown makeup. The Joker is not merely robbing the bank but shedding excess colleagues, all while keeping up a kinky patter that becomes his signature. It's kind of a Molly Bloom soliloquy from a demented jester in a sort of self-consciously ironic mode **COMPLEXITEIT**. He seems aware that his spoken narration is itself a higher kind of performance art, even if it's for an audience of one, himself. **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**

And where is Batman while all of this mayhem is being committed? Off somewhere brooding, because nobody broods better than Christian Bale. As Batman, Bale's not bad. He's got the dreary role of being the unmovable baseline against which all others contrast themselves, a hopeless situation. By doing next to nothing, he does a lot **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**.

He's surprisingly passive in the early going, though what's really going on is that Christopher Nolan, the director **REGISSEUR**, franchise-holder (he did "Batman Begins") and writer (along with brother Jonathan Nolan), is giving the Joker plenty of time to establish his bona fides. It's worth the ticket price to watch the Joker explain to the mob bosses that he's the new big guy in town, even while he's giving them a brief autobiography to explain his particular brand of psychopathic malfeasance **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**. He makes a pencil disappear in a most unusual manner, and then explains to them all why his dad once said to him, "Son, why so serious?," thus setting him off on a lifetime of smiles.

Again, it can't be said too often that even against such a charisma blaster as Eric Roberts (as crime lord Sal Maroni), Ledger rules. He's mesmerizing, yet a little sad, for Ledger has the skill to

show us the monster and at the same time the terrified child who grew to be a monster because he had no choice. **COMPLEXITEIT**

I was pretty much just settling in at this point to watching Bale's morose elegance go charisma-to-charisma against Ledger's loony radiance. What fun. **ENTERTAINMENT** But the Nolan brothers McComplicate things up all Mcfusingly when they introduce the third element. **COMPLEXITEIT**

This is the Nordic-looking Eckhart, who's not only new D.A. Harvey Dent and a super-villain in the making, but also the beau of Batman's chum and lost heart, Rachel Dawes, who was played in "Batman Begins" by Katie Holmes and here by Maggie Gyllenhaal. Gyllenhaal is perhaps too ironic for the Batman world. With those perpetually knowing eyes, she doesn't really fit. **SUBTILITEIT** She has too many dimensions, is too real-worldy -- her Rachel Dawes seems like the kind of girl who got straight A's but also had the lead in the musical, went to Radcliffe and ended up in New York, doing something "interesting." Holmes, much more limited and perhaps a bit more beautiful, was better cast. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

In any event, what follows is a series of triangular competitions: There's the one between friendly rivals Batman and Dent for the heart of Dawes; meanwhile the Joker is playing the crime lords against the police. In a deeper sense, the real three-way is between the law, the criminals and the anarchy that the Joker represents -- that is, the general destruction of the artificial edifice known as civilization, leaving man to his most savage impulses.

You keep waiting for the movie to clarify, to settle down to its archetypal purity: icon of psychotic evil against icon of neurotic good. Music by Wagner in his "Götterdämmerung" mood, screenplay by Nietzsche, with additional lines by Babaloo Mandel. Oh, what a great big movie wallow, what a transformational blast of cine-pleasure **GEBRUIK HAT**.

It never quite arrives. Toward the end, the Dent subplot takes over, primarily as a vehicle to show off some incredible makeup on Harv and explain who he'll be in further installments **SUBTILITEIT**, whether Eckhart plays him or not (Tommy Lee Jones played him in an earlier Batman sequence).

Yes, Batty and Laugher do go at it, against a situation engineered by the Joker: two ferries, one full of criminals, the other of normal citizens, are rigged to explode, each with a detonator to light off the other -- the question being, who among us, the worst or the best, will commit multiple murder in order to survive? But the big fight is not nearly as mythic as it should have been, giving the movie an ending that felt more anti- than climactic.

ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE

The film's mistake is Eckhart as Dent. This is a role that calls for more gift than Eckhart, in other circumstances an honest journeyman, possesses **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. He's got to show a love and an idealism so stout they can stand against the vilest villainy yet so fragile they can shatter into evil at a single catastrophic loss. It's not in him to show a range of contradictions like this, and the character -- as written by the Nolans -- is beyond demonstrating as much, either. So the whole subplot about Dent is mostly just fury and sound, signifying nothing except someone's idea that a summer blockbuster has to be 2 1/2 hours long and therefore must be chock-full of not very compelling subplots to swell it up to epic length if not quality.

The effects and stunts are first-rate, though for big bangs, the opening bank robbery was probably the most powerfully done **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Batman's ability to ride the thermal columns between Gotham shafts downward to safety is very cool. So is the magical way the Batcar becomes a motorcycle with the purring of some electric gizmos, and a lot of the time this Batman seems more like Marlon Brando in "The Wild One" than anyone named Keaton, Kilmer or Clooney who came before.

Review 3:
Illinois Times

07-08-2008

Beyond good and evil

Ambitious, visionary *Dark Knight* touches on eternal themes

[By Chuck Koplinski](#)

We've suffered from a superhero glut at American cinemas this year, so much so that if I don't see another costumed do-gooder before 2009 I'll be more than thrilled. Still and all, when the dust settles at the end of this film year, Christopher Nolan's **REGISSEUR** Batman feature *The Dark Knight* will wind up on my best-of list. It's an ambitious, visionary work that's concerned with far more than a powerful outcast saving the day **GEBRUIK HAT - COMPLEXITEIT**. Posing moral questions about the nature of good and evil and examining the dynamics of living in a free society that depends on the civility of its citizens to survive, the film explores the nature of heroism and villainy to reach the conclusion that they are not very far apart. **INTERPRETATIE** As with most sequels in this genre, *Knight* benefits greatly from not having to spend time dispensing any background concerning its main character. We quickly learn that Batman (Christian Bale) has had a profound effect on crime in Gotham City and that he's become an unofficial aide to Lt. James Gordon (Gary Oldman). Yet despite his presence there's still a great deal of work to do, because organized crime still runs rampant. Gasoline is poured on the fire by the appearance of the Joker (Heath Ledger), who has the temerity to rob a mob-controlled bank. Though the task of stopping this wave of crime is great, Batman has help in his fight in the persons of idealistic District Attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) and his assistant, Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal), as well as trustworthy butler Alfred Pennyworth (Michael Caine) and high-tech-gadget-maker Lucius Fox (Morgan Freeman). As written by Nolan and his brother Jonathan, who borrow heavily from the graphic novels *The Long Halloween* and *The Killing Joke*, the plot is complex **CONTEXT CBA, gritty, and full of surprises COMPLEXITEIT**. More an urban crime epic than a simple comic-book film, the story features its share of action setpieces, most notably the opening heist and a fatal chase scene shot on Chicago's Lower Wacker Drive. However, the meat of the story is the battle of wills that develops between the characters. At stake is the moral fiber of a city, with beleaguered knights awash in a sea of corruption that tempts them every day to turn a blind eye. Each and every character and citizen of Gotham is forced to make a moral choice between right and wrong at some point, and though their actions may seem negligible, the sum total of their decisions decides the fate of their city, as well as of their souls. The film contains a degree of intensity not normally found in features of this sort. Make no mistake, this is not a movie for children. A great many things separate this from previous Batman films, chief among them the portrayal of the Joker. He's nothing more than an agent of chaos, a walking contradiction as his actions seemingly defy logic yet wind up being part of a grand sinister plan. He has more than a few cards up his sleeve and as portrayed by Ledger he comes off as one of the most memorable villains in film history. **This isn't a hammy turn but a passionate, frightening portrayal of psychotic behavior FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Making the character even more compelling is the humanity Ledger brings to the role, as there are hints about the character's tragic background, which he mines to great effect. Even when he's not onscreen, the Joker dominates the film, for we know that his plans drive every other character in the story. Much is made of the similarities between Batman and his nemesis: Both men hide a great deal of pain behind their masks, having suffered great tragedy, and each has responded by allowing his life to be dominated by insanity. Ledger will get the lion's share of accolades, but Bale matches him. **The actor knows that he's in a potentially thankless role, but he makes Bruce Wayne and his alter ego interesting by showing the character's hopes, doubts, and regrets FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. These two pros play expertly off one another and provide the film with an emotional core that elevates it above its genre roots **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**. Although many will be attracted to the film's wow factor, it is the human element that makes it memorable. The members of the main cast all inhabit their roles with a sincerity that grounds them, and we can't help but become invested

in the plight of family-man cop Gordon, tarnished knight Dent, or Dawes, the woman caught between two men. We relate to their trials because they are our own — the struggle to do right in a world of temptation that seems to reward the corrupt and vacuous. **EMOTIONELE AUTHENTICITEIT** The Dark Knight is a film steeped in tragedy, sacrifice, and heroism, and the eternal struggle at its core gives it a resonance that makes it one for the ages. **TJJDLOOSHEID**

**Review 4:
San Fransisco Chronicle**

**Door: Mick LaSalle
16-07-2008**

Movie review: 'Dark Knight': Ledger terrific

Heath Ledger as the Joker in "Dark Knight." Ledger's death cast a heavy shadow of expectation over the film. **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**

Rather than have everyone skip ahead, first let's talk about Heath Ledger. He's the linchpin of "The Dark Knight," and he's terrific. **Director Christopher Nolan REGISSEUR** wanted to make an action movie that was different from other action movies - darker, more twisted, more despairing, more bleak - and he has mostly succeeded in this latest Batman installment. He can thank Ledger for a lot of that.

"The Dark Knight" rides on Ledger's performance as the Joker. So does a lot of audience hope, and that's another element at work here. There has never been a situation quite like this: Audiences for the biggest blockbuster of the summer are flooding in, not just hoping an actor will be good but also expecting and needing him to be absolutely amazing. They want something profound, to put alongside Ledger's Ennis in "Brokeback Mountain." They want the fabled gift that arrives six months after the loved one's death.

Ledger's performance can't live up to that. Perhaps no performance ever could, but especially in this case, with the limits built into the role. Nolan and his collaborators set out to deepen the action-movie form **COMPLEXITEIT**, but the Joker remains in essence a great comic book character, not Iago (or even Javier Bardem in "No Country for Old Men"). **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Nor will audiences find some of the other things they may be unconsciously looking for - a valedictory aspect or a suggestion that the role was eating the actor alive. The truth is, Ledger's death was a surprise to everybody, and "The Dark Knight" neither hints at it nor makes sense of it. Nothing could.

But shelve those outsize expectations, and, suddenly, Ledger's performance opens up. He comes onscreen and electrifies the movie. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** With his smeared lipstick and painted white face, he is every clown who ever terrified a child. He speaks in a measured, Middle American accent, enunciating his words carefully, a voice that could tell bedtime stories in hell. (He seems, actually, to be imitating Al Franken.) His simplicity is fascinating, and as the movie goes on, that simplicity in itself becomes genuinely frightening **SUBTILITEIT – SPANNING/SUSPENS**.

One shot, in particular, crystallizes everything that Ledger and Nolan were working for in "The Dark Knight." It's a shot that deserves to be anthologized, YouTube-ized and immortalized **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR - TJJDLOOSHEID**: The Joker is in the foreground, walking toward the camera, playing (and really, that's the only word) with a bomb detonator. Huge explosions are going on behind him as he walks toward us, stiff and happy and hobbling, like a toddler. He's a child, and this is pure id. **At the heart of existence isn't creation, but chaos.** **COMPLEXITEIT – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Not everything in "The Dark Knight" lives up to or even serves such moments of grim clarity **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. In many ways, and certainly more than "Batman Begins," "The Dark Knight" takes the form of a standard-issue action movie **VERGELIJKING FILMS - ORIGINALITEIT**. It's a little too long (though never boring) and confusingly (though beautifully) shot **SUBTILITEIT**. It's overly plotted and has too much rapid-fire cutting. Nolan had big ambitions for the movie, but before he made "The Dark Knight" into a smart action film, he wanted to make sure it functioned perfectly well as a dumb one. He could have compromised less, and should have.

Still, he has taken on a serious subject and a genuine fear. If "The Dark Knight" is about anything, it's about civic catastrophe and the fragility of our institutions in the face of blind, consuming evil. **INTERPRETATIE** The evil is the Joker, and no one knows what to do about him - not the good guys, like Batman (Christian Bale) or the new district attorney, Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart), and not even the bad guys, like the mob boss played by Eric Roberts. The Joker doesn't play by the usual rules, because he isn't motivated by self-interest. In the words of Alfred the Butler (Michael Caine), he "just wants to see the world burn."

This time out, Bale is almost a mere member of the ensemble, the first among equals that includes Morgan Freeman as Bruce Wayne's operations chief and Gary Oldman as Lt. Gordon. Skillfully, the movie shifts our attention to Eckhart, who, as Gotham's idealistic young crime buster, has the movie's most involved journey. As our focus shifts, so does that of Bruce Wayne's sweetheart, Rachel (Maggie Gyllenhaal), who sees in Harvey the possibility of a stable, happy life.

With its frenetic pace and its many concessions to blockbuster formula, "The Dark Knight" is by no means a complete success. But the more it reveals its dark heart, the better it gets, and at times it seems just a step away from achieving something extraordinary. In the end, it's no leap forward, but it's certainly a step in the right direction: **an action blockbuster extravaganza that's sadder than sad and never pretends otherwise.** **ENTERTAINMENT**

Review 5:

Houston Chronicle

A dark, magnificent *Knight*

By AMY BIANCOLLI Copyright 2008 Houston Chronicle

July 16, 2008, 8:20PM

Heath Ledger died too young, leaving behind performances as faceted, brilliant and few as a handful of diamonds **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**.

His final gem is no less radiant for being pitch black — an outrageous and lip-smackingly creepy portrayal of the Joker in Christopher Nolan's magnificent new film.

The Dark Knight is a Batman movie. Cinema geeks and readers of D.C. Comics have been awaiting its arrival probably since the release of the last one, Nolan's fine, moody *Batman Begins* (2005). But this is not merely a Batman movie. It is not merely a comic-book movie. It is not merely gripping summer entertainment. It is, with *Wall-E*, one of the two best mainstream films to be released all year and far and away the most hypnotic chiller **VERGELIJKING FILMS – SPANNING/SUSPENS**.

What, you're not a big fan of caped-crusader movies? Get over it. *The Dark Knight* takes place in the pulp universe of heroes and villains and men in funny suits (the guy wears ears!), but that's only a backdrop for its elemental human struggle **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** — like *Hamlet's* Castle Elsinore, or *The Sopranos'* Bada Bing. This is a masterful film with operatic performances that just happens to fall within the superhero genre **GEBRUIK HAT – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. And because it does, it exploits a milieu rich with archetypes: the good, the bad, the shadows that cross between them. Gotham is as fine a place as any for a thundering moral crisis.

The Dark Knight reunites Nolan **REGISSEUR** with his *Batman Begins* star, the light-and-dark Christian Bale, as the billionaire with the odd nocturnal alter ego. It reunites him as well with co-screenwriter David S. Goyer (who gets a story credit) and welcomes into the Batcave his brother and frequent collaborator Jonathan Nolan, who co-wrote the screenplays for Christopher's *Memento* and *The Prestige*. This one follows Bruce Wayne as he pursues the Joker and collaborates with Gotham's upright district attorney, Harvey Dent (a gleaming Aaron Eckhart), who dates Batman inamorata Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal) when he isn't putting mobsters on the stand. Bruce longs to hang up his vigilante ways and turn crime-fighting over to Dent, "a hero with a face," but the Joker has other ideas. And how.

I will divulge no more of the plot. Expect to see a few familiar faces: decent cop Gordon (Gary Oldman), wise butler Alfred (Michael Caine), Batgadget designer Lucius Fox (Morgan Freeman). And expect to be socked in the gut. It might be the built-in pathos of Ledger's last performance, or it might be the unyielding dramatic force of the screenplay, but *The Dark Knight* packs a wallop that hurts at every turn; I frankly can't remember the last time I became so emotionally invested in a comic-book movie. Maybe never. **ONTROERING – GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**

Visually, the design of the film is supercharged techno-gothic **GEBRUIK HAT** — clouds in the night sky, cool light in the ceilings below. Musically, Hans Zimmer and James Newton Howard mash Wagnerian sweep with tense glissandi that inch upward in moments of crisis. And there are, need I add, plenty of hard-muscled fight scenes and wicked-cool Bat-vehicles that snarl through the streets of Gotham. (That said, do not bring young children to this movie. Do not. Certain graphic images and disturbing plot elements are downright horrific, even for adults.) **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE**

Ledger inhabits the Joker the way he inhabited the body of a sad gay cowboy in *Brokeback Mountain*: organically, inevitably, as though he was born to smear paint on his face and lick his mouth with relish **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. He goes beyond the Hannibal Lecter model of criminal insanity, with its refined serial killing and superficial gloss of malefaction, to humankind's most ancient and epic definition of evil — as anarchy that infects the order of things. "Wanna know how I got these scars?" he says brightly, but the back story doesn't matter. He is, as he says, "an agent of chaos." He exists. He wreaks havoc on the cosmos. And that's all we need to know.

Jack Nicholson, who played the Joker (as, what can I say, a joker) in Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989), said after Ledger's death in January that he'd "warned" him about the role. Some have inferred that this scarred purple clown, who aimed to drive Gotham crazy, drove Ledger insane as well **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**. But the young man behind the madman was a consummate artist — and if he seemed to blur the line between reality and fiction **SUBTILITEIT**, then it's a tribute to his gift that we can't tell the difference. That, at least, will survive.

5 offline reviews: Watchmen

Review 1:

For a Cold War, a Blue Superhero (and Friends)

By A. O. SCOTT
New York Times
Published: March 6, 2009

The only character in ["Watchmen"](#) who possesses actual superpowers — resulting from an accident at a top-secret government research lab in the late 1950s — is Dr. Manhattan, a blue, bald, naked dude with blank eyes and the voice of [Billy Crudup](#). Dr. Manhattan's existence is busy and fairly melancholy, but I do envy him his ability to perceive every moment of past and future time as a part of a continuous present.

If I had that power, the 2 hours 40 minutes of [Zack Snyder's](#) REGISSEUR grim and grisly excursion into comic-book mythology might not have felt quite so interminable. ("It will never end," says Dr. Manhattan. "Nothing ever ends." No indeed. ENTERTAINMENT) Also, an enhanced temporal perspective would make it possible to watch "Watchmen" not in 2009 but back in 1985, when the story takes place, and when the movie might have made at least a little more sense. COMPLEXITEIT

The original graphic novel, by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, was published by DC in 1986 and '87, first serially and then in a single volume, and it quickly gained a following in discriminating geek circles. The book was very much a product of its moment, both in the history of comics — which were scouting new horizons of complexity and thematic ambition — and in the wider world that "Watchmen" mirrored. CONTEXT CBA

Mr. Moore and Mr. Gibbons concocted a dour alternative chronology of cold-war America, defined by victory in Vietnam, an endless Nixon presidency, nuclear brinkmanship and pervasive social rot. At the same time, they offered a self-conscious critique of the national preoccupation with muscled, masked crime-fighters. INTERPRETATIE Their heroes — the paranoid Rorschach, the shy Nite Owl II, the coldly post-human Dr. Manhattan and various other colleagues and rivals — were violent, ambivalent, treacherous and vain, even though they also seemed to be uniquely capable of saving the world from ultimate catastrophe.

Somewhat remarkably, Mr. Snyder's film freezes its frame of reference in the 1980s, preserving the dank, downcast, revanchist spirit of the original and adding a few period-specific grace notes of its own, including time-capsule references to Lee Iacocca and "The McLaughlin Group." There is also a nod of homage in the direction of ["Apocalypse Now"](#) and a

soundtrack heavy with the baby-boomer anthems that still echoed in the ears of Reagan-era adolescents. **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

Indeed, the ideal viewer — or reviewer, as the case may be — of the “Watchmen” movie would probably be a mid-'80s college sophomore with a smattering of Nietzsche, an extensive record collection and a comic-book nerd for a roommate. The film's carefully preserved themes of apocalypse and decay might have proved powerfully unsettling to that anxious undergraduate sitting in his dorm room, listening to “99 Luftballons” and waiting for the world to end or the Berlin Wall to come down. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

He would also no doubt have been stirred by the costumes of the female superheroes — [Carla Gugino](#) and Malin Akerman, both gamely giving solid performances — who sensibly accessorize their shoulder-padded spandex leotards with garter belts and high-heeled boots. And the dense involution of the narrative might have seemed exhilarating rather than exhausting. **COMPLEXITEIT**

I'm not sure that this hypothetical young man — not to be confused with the middle-aged, 21st-century moviegoer he most likely grew into, whose old copy of “Watchmen” lies in a box somewhere alongside a dog-eared Penguin Classics edition of “Thus Spake Zarathustra” — would necessarily say that Mr. Snyder's “Watchmen” is a good movie. I wouldn't, though it is certainly better than the same director's [“300.”](#) **VERGELIJKING FILMS** But it's possible to imagine that our imaginary student would at least have found some food for thought in Mr. Snyder's grandiose, meticulously art-directed vision of blood, cruelty and metaphysical dread. As it is, the film is more curiosity than provocation, an artifact of a faded world brought to zombie half-life by the cinematic technology of the present. **SUBTILITEIT - ENTERTAINMENT**

The title sequence — in which Mr. Moore's name, at his insistence, does not appear, leaving Mr. Gibbons listed, somewhat absurdly, as a solitary “co-creator” of the graphic novel — seems to acknowledge the project's anachronistic, nostalgic orientation. As [Bob Dylan](#) sings “The Times They Are A-Changin',” familiar images from the past are altered in ways both subtle and outrageous. Tableaus evoking [Andy Warhol](#), the Zapruder film, Studio 54 and Weegee-style crime scenes commingle with snapshots from the lives of several generations of costumed crusaders. **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**. There is a witty pop sensibility evident in these pictures that gets the movie off to a promising start, even though such breeziness works to undermine the ambient gloom of the source material.

That mood returns in full force, though, as Mr. Snyder and the screenwriters, David Hayter and Alex Tse, demonstrate remarkable, at times almost demented, fidelity to the original. Mr. Moore — whose work has been poorly served by movies like [“V for Vendetta,”](#) [“From Hell”](#) and [“The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen”](#) — has declared that “Watchmen” is

impossible to film **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. Perhaps he meant to say redundant, since there are times that the filmmakers seem to have used his book less as an inspiration than as a storyboard. The inevitable omission of some stuff — a pirate-themed comic-within-the-comic; a mysterious gathering of artists and writers; a giant squid — may rankle die-hard cultists, but the tone of world-weary, self-justifying rage has been faithfully preserved, which may be a problem for everyone else. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

“Watchmen” begins with the gory, glass-shattering murder of the Comedian (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), a thuggish soldier of fortune who once helped Dr. Manhattan subdue the Vietcong. This killing sets in motion a series of flashbacks, digressions and long, expository conversations that take us from the grunge of New York City to Antarctica by way of Mars and that reveal a web of complicated relationships among more than a half-dozen major characters.

It turns out that the Comedian, also known as Edward Blake, once tried to rape Silk Spectre (Ms. Gugin), whose daughter, Laurie (Ms. Akerman), a second-generation superhero, lives with Dr. Manhattan and drifts toward an affair with Nite Owl II ([Patrick Wilson](#)). Or rather, with Dan Dreiberger, Nite Owl's nebbishy alter ego, since an act of Congress has outlawed costumed vigilantism. The suave, calculating Ozymandias (Matthew Goode) has managed to find wealth and power in retirement. But no law can deter Rorschach ([Jackie Earle Haley](#)), whose notebook entries serve as voice-over narration and whose clammy, misanthropic worldview dominates the story.

Speaking of acts of congress, “Watchmen” features this year's hands-down winner of the bad movie sex award, superhero division: a moment of bliss that takes place on board Nite Owl's nifty little airship, accompanied by [Leonard Cohen's](#) “Hallelujah.” (By the way, can we please have a moratorium on the use of this song in movies? Yes, I too have heard there was a secret chord that David played, and blah blah blah, but I don't want to hear it again. Do you?) **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

The sex may be laughable **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**, but the violence is another matter. The infliction of pain is rendered in intimate and precise aural and visual detail, from the noise of cracking bones and the gushers of blood and saliva to the splattery deconstruction of entire bodies **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – SUBTILITEIT**. But brutality is not merely part of Mr. Snyder's repertory of effects; it is more like a cause, a principle, an ideology. And his commitment to violence brings into relief the shallow nihilism that has always lurked beneath the intellectual pretensions of “Watchmen **COMPLEXITEIT**.” The only action that makes sense in this world — the only sure basis for ethics or politics, the only expression of love or loyalty or conviction — is killing. **INTERPRETATIE** And the dramatic conflict revealed, at long last, in the film's climactic

arguments is between a wholesale, idealistic approach to mass death and one that is more cynical and individualistic. **GEBRUIK HAT**

This idea is sickening but also, finally, unpersuasive, because it is rooted in a view of human behavior that is fundamentally immature, self-pitying and sentimental. Perhaps there is some pleasure to be found in regressing into this belligerent, adolescent state of mind. But maybe it's better to grow up.

Review 2: **Watchmen' delivers great scenes**

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic

Friday, March 6, 2009
San Francisco Chronicle

Action fantasy. Starring Malin Akerman, Billy Crudup, Jackie Earle Haley, Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Patrick Wilson. **Directed by Zack Snyder** **REGISSEUR**. (R. 163 minutes. At Bay Area theaters.)

Director Zack Snyder is beginning to look like the best thing to happen to the action movie in this decade. His previous film, "300," took the battle of Thermopylae and re-created it, combining stylized visuals with a feeling for history, culture and character. His new picture, "Watchmen," follows in the same vein **VERGELIJKING FILMS**, but goes deeper, achieving a psychological sophistication that "The Dark Knight" aimed for but didn't quite reach. **COMPLEXITEIT – VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Other directors shake the camera to instill excitement. Snyder meticulously choreographs action scenes and thrills audiences with his inventiveness **ORIGINALITEIT**. Other directors go in for brutal realism. Snyder goes in for brutal surrealism, adding little visual grace notes that comment on the action and allow for audience distance. **SUBTILITEIT** These touches, some of them genuinely odd but strangely right, show an unconscious engagement with the material **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**, the work of a director not going through the motions but pulling from all sides of his brain.

He had a strong advantage going into "Watchmen," an audacious adaptation of the graphic novel of the same name. In their screenplay, writers David Hayter and Alex Tse don't do the usual thing of pounding the novel into something simple and linear. Instead they give us a story with lots of digressions and spin-off narratives **CONTEXT CBA – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** In one scene, at a funeral, the movie's forward motion completely stops for a series of flashbacks in which various people recall their contacts with the deceased. These scenes and others like them explore character - and with no apology coming in the form of an action orgy minutes later **SUBTILITEIT - COMPLEXITEIT**.

One could say that the filmmakers' strategy in "Watchmen" is to try to hold the audience's attention, not with a great story (the story is just OK **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**), but with great scenes, one after the next. That's the ultimate risk in any narrative art **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**: It means that the contract for an audience's engagement is up for renewal at the end of every sequence. Yet Snyder and company keep closing the deal. **They keep the ball in the air for**

an epic 163 minutes **GEBRUIK HAT**, by attending to the drama within scenes and by nurturing the film's pervasive mood - despair and nihilism.

That mood descends during the opening credits. Through a mix of archival and manufactured footage, we get the back-story of "Watchmen" through flashes - an alternate history in which masked heroes have been part of the urban landscape for decades. The effect of this credit sequence can't be overstated: It presents, in fictionalized form, the mid to late 20th century as an endless slog of wars, assassinations and mass deceptions. Within minutes, the viewer has been infused with a sense of life on earth as chaotic and hopeless.

It's 1985. Richard Nixon is still president, the Soviets are threatening nuclear war, and a serial killer is threatening two generations of masked heroes, who were once important figures on the American scene. Now disbanded and back in private life, the various heroes, to different degrees, try to discover who is after them. Along the way, they uncover more serious plots and threats to civilization.

Unlike the case of "The Dark Knight," there are no performances here that we'll be talking about at Oscar time, but the ensemble is excellent, with Patrick Wilson as a Batman-like figure, who's shy except in his bat suit; Malin Akerman, as the woman torn between him and her increasingly remote lover - a shape-shifting, radiation altered superman (Billy Crudup); and Jackie Earle Haley as Rorschach, the gruffest, meanest little guy anywhere. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Hard-bitten, weary and contained, the performances reinforce the somber mood. Action scenes, when they happen, are bold and striking, but they're kept to a minimum. As the story isn't the movie's strong suit, it's no surprise that the climax is mild by action movie standards - just an intelligent resolution, then the credits. **ENTERTAINMENT**

The appeal of "Watchmen" is really about something else - the sight of a blimp passing by the twin towers, as seen from an office window. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** It's about the uneasiness we feel when we see those towers resurrected in an alternate universe. **INTERPRETATIE** Part conscious and part unconscious, "Watchmen" tells us of a world without hope and then makes us wonder if we're already living in it.

Review 3:

Comic-book adaptation 'Watchmen' is a messy superhero film for grown-ups

Tom Long
05-03-2009
Detroit News

Suddenly, Batman looks like Gumby.

Mammoth, mangled, violent, confusing, dazzling, dark, excessive and occasionally brilliant **GEBRUIK HAT**, "Watchmen" goes on for so long and throws so much on the screen that it offers plenty of opportunity for both love and hate. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

It's a big mess of a movie, a 20th-century superhero opera that tackles everything from impotence to the apocalypse **COMPLEXITEIT – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. It is also extremely adult, with scenes of near-sickening violence and plenty of skin-baring sex.

Fanboys, geeks and fantasy hounds may well love it; the rest of humanity could find it an incomprehensible experiment in hard, R-rated eye candy. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

An adaptation of the highly praised, 12-part graphic novel (read: comic book) from the '80s, "Watchmen" mostly lives and dies with its source material **CONTEXT CBA**. Director Zack Snyder **REGISSEUR** ("300") works with a script from David Hayter and Alex Tse that clings tightly to author Alan Moore's original story for most of the film's nearly three hours before drastically changing the ending.

And that story is a load. The action takes place in 1985, with Richard Nixon in his third term as president and the world poised (somewhat inexplicably) on the verge of nuclear war.

Superheroes have factored heavily in this version of reality, but now they've been outlawed for their vigilante ways, and the main characters here -- Nite Owl (Patrick Wilson), Silk Spectre (Malin Akerman), Rorschach (Jackie Earle Haley), the Comedian (Jeffrey Dean Morgan) and Ozymandias (Matthew Goode) -- are all supposed to be retired.

Then again, none of these folks really have super powers; they just seem to be really good at breaking bones and maiming people.

The one true superhero would be Dr. Manhattan (Billy Crudup), a blue-skinned former physicist, transformed by a freak accident, who likes to walk around naked and seems to be able to manipulate all time and matter. He helps win the Vietnam War for Nixon by simply blowing up enemies with a wave of his hand. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

At the outset, one of them is mysteriously murdered, and the paranoid right-winger Rorschach suspects on scant evidence that someone is out to kill former superheroes. So as the film skillfully unveils each character's back story the search for a super-murderer is on.

Good points, bad points: **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

- The film's opening minutes are unbelievably clumsy. A political TV show is followed by a series of posed stills from the history of superheroes as Bob Dylan sings "The Times They Are a Changin'." Simon and Garfunkel and Jimi Hendrix show up later on the woefully inappropriate soundtrack. Uh, it's 1985, not 1965. **SUBTILITEIT**

- The Dr. Manhattan stuff is incredible, from the magical look of a home he builds on Mars to the more vulnerable moments he suffers while dealing with humanity. Crudup may be covered in inexpressive blue-face with his head floating on a special effects body, but he pulls this off. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

- The violence quotient is for the most part completely unwarranted. It does nothing to help the story along. Do we really need to see two dogs fighting over the leg of a pedophile's murder victim? **ENTERTAINMENT**

- Rorschach works best when his inkblot mask is taken away and the thoroughly convincing Haley can make his character human. Some of the best moments come when Rorschach is imprisoned.

- The whole city-as-hell, people-are-scum thing is just as clichéd as it was in the original story, the kind of outlook a 14-year-old might find deep **ORIGINALITEIT**.

- The new ending is well-conceived but somewhat poorly executed, dragging on and weighed down with overdramatic language.

This sort of back-and-forth could go on for quite a while, and probably will amongst fans. The real question here is whether "Watchmen" has taken a step too far for superhero movies, whether it's just too ambitious for its own good. SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT

Ultimately, this is a film that stumbles repeatedly beneath its own weight and self-seriousness. You have to applaud the audacity, cringe at the corniness and ask: Does the wonder carry the wavering?

The answer: Not completely.

Review 4:

Watchmen

/// March 4, 2009

by Roger Ebert
Chicago Sun- Times

After the revelation of "The Dark Knight," here is "Watchmen," another bold exercise in the liberation of the superhero movie VERGELIJKING FILMS. It's a compelling visceral film GEBRUIK HAT — sound, images and characters combined into a decidedly odd visual experience that evokes the feel of a graphic novel SUBTILITEIT. It seems charged from within by its power as a fable; we sense it's not interested in a plot so much as with the dilemma of functioning in a world losing hope INTERPRETATIE.

That world is America in 1985, with Richard Nixon in the White House and many other strange details, although this America occupies a parallel universe in which superheroes and masked warriors operate. The film confronts a paradox that was always there in comic books: The heroes are only human. CONTEXT CBA They can be in only one place at a time (with a possible exception to be noted later). Although a superhero is able to handle one dangerous situation, the world has countless dangerous situations, and the super resources are stretched too thin. Faced with law enforcement anarchy, Nixon has outlawed superhero activity, quite possibly a reasonable action. Now the murder of the enigmatic vigilante the Comedian ([Jeffrey Dean Morgan](#)) has brought the Watchmen together again. Who might be the next to die?

Dr. Manhattan ([Billy Crudup](#)), the only one with superpowers in the literal sense, lives outside ordinary time and space, the forces of the universe seeming to coil beneath his skin. Ozymandias ([Matthew Goode](#)) is the world's smartest man. The Nite Owl ([Patrick Wilson](#)) is a man isolated from life by his mastery of technology. Rorschach (Jackie Earl Haley) is a man who finds meaning in patterns that may only exist in his mind. And Silk Spectre II ([Malin Akerman](#)) lives with one of the most familiar human challenges, living up to her parents, in this case the original Silk Spectre ([Carla Gugino](#)). Dr. Manhattan is both her lover and a distant father figure living in a world of his own.

These characters are garbed in traditional comic book wardrobes — capes, boots, gloves, belts, masks, props, anything to make them one of a kind SUBTILITEIT. Rorschach's cloth mask, with its endlessly shifting inkblots, is one of the most intriguing superhero masks ever, always in constant motion, like a mood ring of the id. Dr. Manhattan is contained in a towering, muscular, naked blue body; he was affected by one of those obligatory secret experiments gone wild. Never mind the details; what matters is that he possibly exists at a quantum level, at which particles seem exempt from the usual limitations of space and time COMPLEXITEIT. If it seems unlikely that quantum materials could assemble into a tangible physical body, not to worry. Everything is made of quantum particles, after all. There's a lot we don't know about them, including how they constitute Dr. Manhattan, so the movie is vague about his precise reality. I was going to say Silk Spectre II has no complaints, but actually she does.

The mystery of the Comedian's death seems associated with a plot to destroy the world. The first step in the plot may be to annihilate the Watchmen, who are All That Stand Between, etc. It is hard to see how anyone would benefit from the utter destruction of the planet, but remember that in 1985 there was a nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union that threatened exactly that. Remember "Better Dead Than Red"? There were indeed cold warriors who preferred to be dead rather than red, reminding me of David Merrick's statement, "It's not enough for me to win. My enemies must lose." **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

In a cosmic sense it doesn't really matter who pushed the Comedian through the window. In a cosmic sense, nothing really matters, but best not meditate on that too much. The Watchmen and their special gifts are all the better able to see how powerless they really are, and although all but Dr. Manhattan are human and back the home team, their powers are not limitless. Dr. Manhattan, existing outside time and space, is understandably remote from the fate of our tiny planet, although perhaps he still harbors some old emotions.

Those kinds of quandaries engage all the Watchmen, and are presented in a film experience of often fearsome beauty **GEBRUIK HAT**. It might seem improbable to take seriously a naked blue man, complete with discreet genitalia, but Billy Crudup brings a solemn detachment to Dr. Manhattan that is curiously affecting **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. Does he remember how it felt to be human? No, but hum a few bars. ... Crudup does the voice and the body language, which is transformed by software into a figure of considerable presence.

"Watchmen" focuses on the contradiction shared by most superheroes: They cannot live ordinary lives but are fated to help mankind. That they do this with trademarked names and appliances goes back to their origins in Greece, where Zeus had his thunderbolts, Hades his three-headed dog, and Hermes his winged feet. Could Zeus run fast? Did Hermes have a dog? No.

That level of symbolism is coiling away beneath all superheroes **COMPLEXITEIT**. What appeals with Batman is his humanity; despite his skills, he is not supernatural. "Watchmen" brings surprising conviction to these characters as flawed and minor gods **SUBLITEIT**, with Dr. Manhattan possessing access to godhead on a plane that detaches him from our daily concerns — indeed, from days themselves. In the film's most spectacular scene, he is exiled to Mars, and in utter isolation reimagines himself as a human, and conjures (or discovers? I'm not sure) an incredible city seemingly made of crystal and mathematical concepts. This is his equivalent to 40 days in the desert, and he returns as a savior.

The film is rich enough to be seen more than once. I plan to see it again, this time on IMAX, and will have more to say about it. I'm not sure I understood all the nuances and implications, but I am sure I had a powerful experience. It's not as entertaining as "The Dark Knight," but like the "Matrix" films, LOTR and "The Dark Knight," it's going to inspire fevered analysis **ENTERTAINMENT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. I don't want to see it twice for that reason, however, but mostly just to have the experience again.

Review 5:

Watch out — superhero flick is over the top

By AMY BIANCOLLI Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

March 4, 2009, 4:24PM

Houston Chronicle

"Unfilmable" was the word most often used. For years, opinionated fandom asked whether *Watchmen* — Alan Moore's and Dave Gibbons' game-changing 1980s

deconstruction of the spandexed-superhero comic-book genre — could be rendered faithfully as a movie. It's too nonlinear, some argued. Too violent. Too sexy. Too long. Too mature. Too cynical. Too complicated. Too dark. **CONTEXT CBA**

In truth, it's all of those things. But the tale of outcast vigilantes in a rotting alternate America was never “unfilmable.” The question isn't whether *Watchmen* could be turned into a movie. The question is, should it? And judging from Zack Snyder's **REGISSEUR** garish, uneven and excessively cruel interpretation, I'd say no. It shouldn't. It should have remained what it was from the start: a masterpiece of vicious Cold War paranoia, completely and gut-churningly rendered on the printed page.

The film is not all bad POSITIEF/NEGATIEF. Written by David Hayter and Alex Tse, it remains largely faithful to the structure and aesthetic of the book — beginning with the murder of Eddie Blake (a nasty, dishy Jeffrey Dean Morgan), aka the Comedian, a hater of women and lover of irony who wears the series' iconic yellow smiley pin. In the plot that follows, a few elements are altered or ditched (what! no huge squid?), but plenty others are panel-for-panel re-creations of the comic.

The dystopian setting remains intact, with a still-in-charge Richard Nixon overseeing a country on the brink of nuclear war with the Soviets.

The Watchmen, a bent band of masked crime-fighters, were outlawed by Congress 10 years earlier. But when the Comedian gets whacked, his old comrade Rorschach investigates — he's the one in the morphing ink-blot mask, a guise assumed by Jackie Earle Haley with wiry tension and a Batman croak. The one in the dorky raptor headpiece is Nite Owl, aka Daniel Dreiberg, a decent fella with virility issues.

Dan (a nicely defeated Patrick Wilson) pines for Silk Spectre, aka Laurie Jupiter (a half-hearted Malin Akerman), but she's been dating Dr. Manhattan, aka Jon Osterman (Billy Crudup), a hulking cerulean nude who might be a member of the Blue Man Group if a nuclear meltdown dissolved their clothing.

Jon can bilocate, bifurcate, blow up to towering proportions, win the Vietnam War, see into his future and zap himself or anyone anywhere, even Mars. He likes it there, because it's pretty and empty and red. He's not so fond of people any longer — and anyway, turns out he might be a carcinogen. Bummer.

But nobody's perfect. And if you ask me, Dr. Manhattan is hands-down the coolest thing going **ENTERTAINMENT.** He brings to *Watchmen* a philosophizing grandeur that the rest of the movie lacks, even as Crudup whispers his lines like early Marilyn Monroe **COMPLEXITEIT.**

At least his breathiness is less annoying than Matthew Goode's, whose super-smarty-pants Ozymandias suffers from pinched locution and a bad dye job **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT.** Even worse, stand-ins for Nixon, Lee Iacocca, Pat Buchanan and other period celebs — all dolled up with lumpy faux schnozzes and unfortunate wigs — add a cheap cartoonish goofiness that feels incongruous in the world of the Watchmen.

But the biggest problem, top to bottom, is overkill. It is too long; it is too violent. I didn't think it possible, but Snyder's taste for hyperbolic spicch and splat (which looked more artful and less revolting in 300) **goes beyond the already-shocking bloodshed of the original work.**

VERGELIJKING FILMS

In the book, dogs gnaw on a leg bone. In the movie, it's a little girl's dismembered foot. In the book, Rorschach sets her killer on fire. In the movie, he chunks him with a meat cleaver — six times **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL,** straight to the head. A few scenes later, an inmate gets both arms buzzed off by a saw.

It's worth noting Alan Moore pulled his name from the credits, just as he pulled it from 2005's far-better *V for Vendetta*. Good move — but not because *Watchmen*'s “unfilmable.” Because it is, at times, unwatchable.

5 offline reviews: The Crow

Review 1: 'The Crow' (R)

By Desson Howe
Washington Post Staff Writer
May 13, 1994

Brandon Lee, slain by a stunt gun during the production of "The Crow," **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN** haunts every frame of his final film. The 28-year-old actor's passing suffuses this scenario, about a murdered rock musician whose ghost wreaks vengeance on his killers, with prescient, touching irony **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**: An otherwise respectable pop noir is transformed into something eerie and deeply compelling. **GEBRUIK HAT - COMPLEXITEIT**

Adapted from the underground comic book series of the same name, "Crow" flutters stylishly through a nighttime world of rain-drenched back streets, vertiginous rooftops and shadowy club rooms. **CONTEXT CBA** The images are frenetic, violent and composed with cartoonish artfulness **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. The camera flits from ledge to ledge like a restless Harpy. When it's time for fighting, the songs (by Nine Inch Nails, Rage Against the Machine and others) punch loud, boisterous holes in the soundtrack. And when the story turns mournful -- which is often -- Graeme Revell's electronic, dirgelike score drapes the story in a postmodern pall.

Against this MTV-style barrage of sound and image **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**, a rather tragic love story unfolds. Lee is Eric Draven, a small-time rock musician who, with his fiancée Shelly (Sofia Shinas), is murdered by a gang of hoodlums on "Devil's Night," the evening before Halloween. Exactly a year later, Draven -- accompanied by an otherworldly crow -- emerges from the grave to take systematic, bloody revenge. His reappearance echoes a legend in which unhappy souls (with a crow in attendance) return to the living to redress their grievances.

Draven, his face painted in mime-cum-death-mask white, deals each gangster his just deserts. A punk who carries several knives and a thug with a morphine habit find themselves stabbed to death with the tools of their trade -- and so on.

As Draven works his vengeful way up to the bass-voiced ringleader, Top Dollar (Michael Wincott), he establishes sympathetic links with the detective (Ernie Hudson) assigned to the original massacre and the girl (Rochelle Davis) Draven and Shelly used to take care of.

The characters, derived from James O'Barr's "graphic novel," are comic-book archetypes, their dialogue (penned by screenwriters David J. Schow and John Shirley) a collection of cartoon-balloon hokum. ("I think we broke her," Top Dollar tells his funeral sister-lover as a naked concubine lies dead between them.) In fact, the whole story, full of messianic images, Gothic steeple finales and music-video poignancies, is decidedly corny. **CONTEXT CBA - SUBTILITEIT**

But Australian director Alex Proyas **REGISSEUR** keeps the action moving so fast and atmospherically, everything gains dimension. Even the violence (actually toned down from an original NC-17 rating) seems too stylized to take seriously **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. Whether his motives were profit-oriented, eulogistic, artistic or all three, Proyas has composed the perfect swan song. Finally, there is Lee -- as Draven -- enjoying the last moments of his life in flashback, with a lover he'll never get to marry. The real-life similarities are palpably affecting. But "Crow," in all its arty trashiness and sepulchral reverence, gives Lee's tragedy an oddly comforting

epilogue ENTERTAINMENT – CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST. If he had to die so soon, this movie is the best and most appropriate sendoff Lee could have hoped for.

Review 2:

The Crow (1994)

Review/Film; Eerie Links Between Living and Dead

By CARYN JAMES

New York Times

Published: May 11, 1994

The first time Brandon Lee appears on screen in "The Crow," he is climbing out of his grave. (The scene is the first in which his face can be recognized; an earlier scene shows his character's body lying on the street in the shadowy distance.) Lee's ghoulish entrance is the eeriest possible sight, of course, because he was killed by a misloaded prop gun while making this movie just over a year ago FOCUS ACTEURS LEVEN – SPANNING/SUSPENS. Now he howls as he stands in the mud and rain in the middle of the night playing Eric Draven, a small-time rock musician who has risen from the dead to get justice a year after he and his fiancée were murdered.

The advance publicity lavished on "The Crow" comes almost entirely from its newsy, tragic sidelight. Based on a comic-book character created by James O'Barr in the early 1980's, this is definitely a genre film. CONTEXT CBA It is a dark, lurid revenge fantasy and not the breakthrough, star-making movie some people have claimed. But it is a genre film of a high order, stylish and smooth. Its dark look of midnight terror and its skewed cityscape link it to the "Batman" movies, but "The Crow" makes even the bleak "Batman II" seem like a kiddie's playground. VERGELIJKING FILMS

The crow that accompanies Draven on his brief return to earth is his link between the worlds of the living and the dead. In flashback scenes, fragmented and full of jumpy camera movements, we see that Draven's fiancée was raped and murdered in their apartment and that he was sent flying out the window by a seamy band of drug dealers who resented the couple's attempts to clean up the neighborhood.

On his return from the dead, Draven puts white makeup on his face and paints black lines to exaggerate his eyes and mouth. This lithe and gaunt figure is clearly a comic-book avenger with supernatural powers SUBTILITEIT. When he is shot, his wounds heal magically. Ernie Hudson, as a policeman who saw Draven's corpse, looks quizzical when he notices him walking the streets, but quickly accepts the fact that a man has returned from the dead; it's just the kind of thing that happens in fantasy land.

Like most action-genre movies, "The Crow" spends much of its time showing the brutality with which Draven goes after his murderers. There are several major shootouts, a couple of explosions and one death in which Draven's victim ends up with a dozen or so hypodermic

needles sticking out of his body. As the gang leader, called Top Dollar, Michael Wincott has a genuinely evil rasp in his voice. Top Dollar seems to be sleeping with his half-sister, a sorceress, but none of the characters are individualized much.

"The Crow" is more mainstream than it might have been, because script changes were made to soften the story after Lee's death. ORIGINALITEIT Sarah, a young girl befriended by Draven and his fiancée, now offers a voice-over at the film's beginning and end about preserving the memory of those you have loved. Draven saves Sarah from her drug-addled mother. Rochelle Davis makes Sarah a sympathetic, streetwise girl, but her enhanced role merely adds a trendy death-culture gloss. It doesn't change the film's violent nature or eye-for-an-eye message.

Brandon Lee had only three days of filming left when he was killed, and the performance is essentially his. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT There are some scenes in shadow that use a double, and some computer-enhanced scenes that seamlessly lift his image from one setting and place it in another. None of this becomes distracting.

Lee had great presence, but who knows if this movie would have led to more mainstream parts for him? The truth is that the role of Draven didn't require a huge amount of acting.

The film does offer promise for the future of its director, Alex Proyas REGISSEUR, a 33-year-old Australian who is a veteran of music videos and commercials. CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR Mr. Proyas's flair suggests he might make the leap to mainstream success. Sleek and accidentally haunting though it is, "The Crow" belongs in its niche.

Review 3:

The Crow

BY ROGER EBERT / May 13, 1994
Chicago Sun-Times

"The Crow" is, of course, the movie Brandon Lee was making when he was accidentally shot dead during the filming of a scene. It is not without irony that the story involves a hero who returns from the dead - just as, in a sense FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN, Lee has with the release of this film. It is a stunning work of visual style SUBTILITEIT - the best version of a comic book universe I've seen - and Brandon Lee clearly demonstrates in it that he might have become an action star, had he lived FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT.

The story begins with a resurrection from the dead. A rock star named Eric Draven (Lee) is murdered, along with his fiancée, on the eve of their wedding. His soul is escorted to the next world (according to the narration) by a crow; but when a spirit is unhappy there because of unsettled business on earth, sometimes the crow will bring him back again. And so a year later, on Halloween Eve, Eric reappears on earth, vowing vengeance on those who committed the murders - and the evil kingpin who ordered them.

That's about all there is to the story. Flashbacks recreate the original murder, and then Eric, led by the crow, tracks the mean, rainy, midnight streets on his lonely quest. He has fashioned for himself some death's-head makeup, and since he is already dead, of course bullets

cannot harm him (except sometimes - which is always the catch in comic book stories).

The story exists as an excuse for the production values of the film, which are superb **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – GEBRUIK HAT**. The director, [Alex Proyas](#) **REGISSEUR**, and his technical team have created a world that will remind you of the forlorn urban wasteland in "[Blade Runner](#)" and of the Gothic extravagances in "[Batman](#), **VERGELIJKING FILMS**" yet this world is grungier and more forbidding than either. It's not often that movies can use miniatures and special effects and sets and visual tricks to create a convincing place, rather than just a series of obvious sets. But "[The Crow](#)" does. **SUBTILITEIT**

The visual style, by cinematographer Dariusz Wolski, obviously owes a great deal to the study of comic books (or "graphic novels," as they like to be called). The camera swoops high above the city, or dips low for extreme-angle shots. **SUBTILITEIT – CONTEXT CBA** Shadows cast fearsome daggers into the light. Buildings are exaggerated in their architectural details, until they seem a shriek of ornamentation. The superhero comic books of the 1940s, especially "[Batman](#)," grew up at the same time as film noir, and borrowed some of the same visual language. But comic books were not simply drawn versions of film noir; for one thing, the films tended to use their extreme-angle shots for atmosphere and storytelling, and would hold them for a time, while comics are meant to be read quickly, and give the equivalent of cinematic quick-cutting. "[The Crow](#)," with its fast pace and its countless camera set-ups, evokes comics much more than the more good-looking but more leisurely "[Batman](#)" movies. It also reflects a bleak modern sensibility, with little room for the comic villains in "[Batman](#)." The actors are adapted in appearance to this graphic noir vision; their appearances are as exaggerated as the shots they appear in. For example: The bosoms of women in comic books always seem improbably perfect but sketched in - drawn by a pen, not made of flesh - and the villainess Myca ([Bai Ling](#)) in this story has the same look. **COMPLEXITEIT – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** As the half-sister of the villain, she represents a drawn image, not a person, and so do many of the other characters, including a thin, angular [Brandon Lee](#) behind his makeup.

The sound track is wall-to-wall hard rock (by the Cure, Stone Temple Pilots, Violent Femmes, Pantera, Nine Inch Nails, etc). **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**

At times the film looks like a violent music video, all image and action, no content. If it had developed more story and characterization, however, it might not have had quite the same success in evoking a world where the bizarre reality, not the story, is the point. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

The scene in which [Brandon Lee](#) was accidentally shot is not in the film, but the fact of his death cannot help providing a melancholy subtext to everything he does on screen, and to all of his speeches about death and revenge. It is a sad irony that this film is not only the best thing he accomplished, but is actually more of a screen achievement than any of the films of his father, [Bruce Lee](#).

Both careers seemed cut short just as early potential was being realized. There was talk of shelving "[The Crow](#)," but I'm glad they didn't. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK** At least what [Brandon Lee](#) accomplished - in a film that looks to have been hard, dedicated labor - has been preserved.

Review 4: **A Hero Who Cheats Death**

Movies: The Late Brandon Lee's Eerie Turn On Screen
By [David Ansen](#) | NEWSWEEK
From the magazine issue dated May 16, 1994

WHEN BRANDON LEE WAS ACCIDENTALLY shot to death on the set of *The Crow* in March 1993, he had only three days of filming left. FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN The production shut down, and the devastated Australian director, Alex Proyas REGISSEUR, wanted to abandon the \$15 million production FILM ALS PRODUCT. It took the entreaties of Lee's fiancée, Eliza Hutton, and his mother, Linda Lee Cadwell, along with others associated with the film, to persuade Proyas to complete the production. "The real issue was psychological," explains coproducer Edward Pressman. "Alex went back to Australia for a month to get his head together, and we took another month off to figure out how to continue."

The film's problems were not over. Beshoots added an extra \$8 million to the budget FILM ALS PRODUCT. In September, Paramount, the original distributor, dropped the movie, claiming that Lee's death, coupled with the dark story line, made it uncomfortable. Based on the underground comic books of James O'Barr, "*The Crow*" is a violent fantasy in which Lee's character, Eric Draven, a Detroit rock guitarist, rises from the dead to avenge the brutal rape and murder of his fiancée and his own death CONTEXT CBA. It was during the filming of this murder that Bruce Lee's son was fatally struck by a dummy bullet. The film of the actual accident was deliberately destroyed, though footage shot just before is seen in the completed film.

Miramax, the new distributor, has been careful to market the film without exploiting Lee's death, consulting with his family and fiancée throughout. But it will be hard for anybody to see "*The Crow*" unhaunted by the tragedy. The "fun" of the relentless mayhem the plot consists of little more than a series of murders, as Eric kills his killers in a fashion befitting each of their vices—may be, for anyone past their teenage years, less of a kick than intended. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK

The early reviews, in the Hollywood trade papers and *Rolling Stone*, have been raves—perhaps a reaction to the speculation, after Paramount defected, that the film was a disaster. It's a slick and evocatively designed movie with a dystopian Gothic vision that owes an obvious debt to "*Batman*" and "*Blade Runner*." VERGELIJKING FILMS - SUBTILITEIT It succeeds in bringing O'Barr's comic-book vision to life, but there's little else going on behind the graphic razzle-dazzle and the moody, ominous soundtrack. Proyas's virtuosity as a director of music videos and Nike commercials is all too obvious here: strobe lights, fast cutting and rock-star iconography CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR. Some welcome touches of wit are supplied by Ernie Hudson, as a sympathetic cop, and Michael Wincott, as the gravel-voiced leader of the scurvy band of nihilists Draven dispatches one by one.

But it is the graceful, gorgeous Lee whose image lingers on the retina. Dressed in torn punk black, his face painted mime white with clown teardrops and exaggerated lips, Lee got to demonstrate for the first time his sensual charisma. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** It is both tantalizing and frustrating to watch him buried under the expressionist makeup, in a role that offers intensity but little characterization. Knowing you won't see him again, you want more than the few glimpses "The Crow" provides of his real face. The movie leaves you with the excitement, and the sadness, of great potential lost

Review 5:

The Crow

By TODD MCCARTHY
Variety: 16-04-07

"The Crow" flies high. For a while rumored to be impossible to complete due to the tragic accidental death of star Brandon Lee eight days before lensing was due to wrap FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN, pic that finally emerges is a seamless, pulsating, dazzlingly visual revenge fantasy that stands as one of the most effective live-actioners ever derived from a comic strip.

Despite a simplistic script that unfortunately brandishes its cartoon origins **COMPLEXITEIT** rather too obviously **ORIGINALITEIT**, the combo of edgy excitement, stunning design, hot soundtrack and curiosity about Lee will rep an irresistible lure for young audiences in large numbers, giving this very strong commercial wings **ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE - SUBTILITEIT**. As far as Miramax/Dimension is concerned, it's too bad the film isn't moving into the marketplace right now, rather than on May 11, since there's absolutely nothing out there that could compete with it.

Based on James O'Barr's bold comic strip, which has generated a considerable following since he started drawing it in the early 1980s, "The Crow" centers on a dark angel who literally rises from the dead to settle matters with the gang of thugs who killed him and his fiancée on the eve of their wedding. Tale is more pungent than poignant, however, in that it's set in a generic inner city so hellish it makes Gotham City look like the Emerald City. **CONTEXT CBA – VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Noted Aussie commercial and musicvideo helmer Alex Proyas **REGISSEUR** drenches his debut Yank feature in a claustrophobic, rain-soaked atmosphere that owes more than a little to "Blade Runner." But the movie still generates a distinctive personality due to its aggressive narrative vigor, agreeable mixture of sweetness and nastiness, and technical mastery **GEBRUIK HAT**.

Tour de force opening brings the viewer in for a slow landing over a bleak urban landscape blighted by fires on Devil's Night, Halloween Eve. The Crow, as a girl's narration informs, transports souls to the land of the dead, but if a crime was so heinous that the soul can't rest, the Crow can bring it back.

That's all the explanation needed for the rebirth, a year later, of Eric Draven (Lee), who, **as is shown in brilliant, FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** violent flashes of montage, was murdered by a bunch of drooling hooligans who then raped and mortally injured his bride-to-be. A rock

musician by trade, Eric is led, one by one, to his vile assailants by a large crow that flaps above the desolate streets like a mythic bearer of dread tidings.

Pic's main problem is an exceedingly straight, A-B-C-D narrative line with no subplots, twists or turns, which even Proyas' protean direction can't keep comfortably aloft the entire time **COMPLEXITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. Banter and nasty repartee could also have been sharpened up and made more humorous.

But film creates one of the most imaginatively rendered, impressively sustained artificial worlds seen on film in some time, **and the action is riveting** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Vet video production designer Alex McDowell has devised a staggering look for the bombed-out cityscape.

McDowell, Proyas, ace lenser Dariusz Wolski ("Romeo Is Bleeding") and costume designer Arianne Phillips have carefully calculated a shadowy, color-drained environment, **melding their contributions into a vision worthy of a single visual artist. Special effects, particularly those involving the flying crow, are outstanding.** **SUBTILITEIT- CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**

But certainly much of the attention here will rightly focus upon Brandon Lee. The 28-year-old son of the late Bruce Lee had not had a very distinguished career up until this, but this role would have made him a performer to reckon with, and perhaps a star **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**. His striking looks, sinuous presence and agile moves lock one's attention, and the painful irony of his role as a dead man returning from the grave will not go unnoticed.

Most supporting thespys seem to be competing for the title of meanest, nastiest, scummiest villain. Graeme Revell's outstandingly moody score is supplemented by more than a dozen edgy rock songs that promise a fine soundtrack.

A sequel would have seemed like a foregone conclusion. But, so sadly, it would be missing this film's central presence, Lee. Film is dedicated to him and his fiancée, Eliza.

5 offline reviews: Spawn

Review 1: New York Times:

Spawn (1997)

August 1, 1997

A Bargain With Satan And a Devil of a Time

By STEPHEN HOLDEN
Published: August 1, 1997

From its opening moments, in which a growling narrator thunders out some oracular mumbo jumbo about Armageddon, "Spawn" is an incoherent blitz of noise, chintzy special effects and bargain-basement allegory ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE - SUBTILITEIT. Based on a popular comic book by Todd McFarlane, the movie has stars like Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, Martin Sheen, D. B. Sweeney and Theresa Randle CONTEXT CBA. Their apoplectic overacting is more than matched by the special effects in which the movie is garishly gift-wrapped. SUBTILITEIT – FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

More than half of what appears on the screen is a fiery montage of infernal comic-book images created by Industrial Light and Magic. But after 15 minutes, this yellow-orange vision of spiraling circles of hell, snorting devils and demonic shapes continually morphing out of one another, begins to seem redundant and conceptually impoverished. ORIGINALITEIT

"Spawn" 's title character (Mr. White) is a fearless United States Government agent who, after being disfigured and assassinated by his corrupt boss (Mr. Sheen), makes a posthumous pact with the devil. In exchange for returning to earth to see his beloved wife (Ms. Randle), he agrees to lead the campaign of Hell's Army to destroy the human race. Vying for what's left of his soul are a time-traveling figure (Nicol Williamson) who is part priest, part knight, and a wisecracking blue-masked agent of the devil named Clown (Mr. Leguizamo), who gets to mouth what passes for humor in the film HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID.

Biting hungrily into a slice of pizza wriggling with maggots, Clown remarks, "I hate anchovies."

"Spawn" is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned). The tone of the film is furiously violent, but there's no real gore, and the dialogue goes through contortions to seem ominous while remaining profanity free.

Review 2: Los Angeles times

By JOHN ANDERSON, FOR THE TIMES

Friday August 1, 1997

If you're in the mood for Julie Harris in "The Belle of Amherst," there's probably no need to read any further. If, however, what you want is an anguished superhero from hell whose face

looks like the inside of an all-weather radial, "Spawn" might just be the movie for you
VOORSPELLING REACTIE.

Based on Todd McFarlane's nightmare comic book, "Spawn" CONTEXT CBA stars Michael Jai White (HBO's "Tyson") as Al Simmons, a rogue member of a rogue agency who is sent to hell by his superior, Jason Wynn (Martin Sheen), when he's virtually incinerated during a germ-warfare "experiment" in North Korea. Why Simmons didn't go in the other direction is not explained, and I don't want to ask, but once down there he makes a pact with Satan: By agreeing to lead the forces of hell against heaven at Armageddon, he is allowed to return to Earth and see his beloved wife, Wanda (Theresa Randle).

Inspired by the Tim Burton school of gothic urban decay, and with a few episodes of the old "Beauty and the Beast" series under his belt, director Mark A.Z. Dippe does a considerable job re-creating the feel of McFarlane's books VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS - REGISSEUR; the scenes in hell are particularly ghoulish and otherworldly; the fire-scarred Simmons, who has metamorphosed into Spawn, takes the disquiet and self-loathing of the modern comic hero to new heights--or depths--especially when you consider that he's already dead. The special effects are effective and aggressive, although one might occasionally confuse a divine vortex with a flushed toilet. SUBTILITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

Any questions will be answered in the sequel, which seems inevitable given that the final words of "Spawn" tell us in no uncertain terms that the story hasn't ended. But then, "Spawn" is mostly about establishing its hero and seeking revenge: Spawn, cape aswirl and eyes aglow, wants Wynn and is relentless in his pursuit.

Spawn doesn't actually return to Earth until five years have passed; finding Wanda married to his best friend Terry (D.B. Sweeney) doesn't help his disposition. Neither does the fact that he's caught on the horns of an infernal dilemma. The evil Clown, played by an antic but very funny John Leguizamo HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID (he gets all the good lines), is intent on filling Satan's army with lost souls; to that end, he devises a scheme whereby Spawn's killing of Wynn will unleash an unstoppable viral plague. Nicol Williamson, posturing like hell's boulevardier, is Cogliostro, another hellian who urges Spawn to reject Satan and preserve life. Spawn, already in need of some serious dermatology, now has this end-of-the-world thing to worry about.

There's lots of action and lots of dubious theology COMPLEXITEIT, and the religious right will be tying itself in knots trying to figure out whom to boycott (New Line is owned by Time Warner, if that's any help). "Spawn," meanwhile, does what it's supposed to do, which is make a comic come to life. Or is it death? ENTERTAINMENT

Review 3:

Washington Post

'Spawn': Murky Depths

By Rita Kempley
Washington Post Staff Writer
Aug. 1, 1997

Bleaker than Batman VERGELIJKING FILMS and crisper than bacon, "Spawn's" deep-fried superhero takes on the Devil himself in this muddled revenge fantasy inspired by Todd McFarlane's best-selling comic book. The film, like the comic book and the animated series, CONTEXT CBA draws heavily on religious doctrine INTERPRETATIE, but it doesn't skimp on the visually enhanced fart jokes. HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID

The movie opens as Al Simmons (Michael Jai White), a crack CIA operative, is set afire by corrupt colleagues, dies, spends five years in Hell and finally is resurrected as Spawn. Before returning to Earth, he signs a pact with the Devil, promising to lead his army in exchange for one last visit with his beloved wife (Theresa Randle).

Among his opponents is the Clown (John Leguizamo in 20 pounds of fat), supplying **both gas and comic relief**. **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID** The sick little fiend delights in tormenting Spawn, whom he calls Crispy, and makes it his business to keep him in a swivet.

Help arrives in the form of Cogliostro (Nicol Williamson), a magus who manages to talk some sense into the bewildered super hero. Apparently, such pacts are not as binding as they once were, for Spawn has the choice of nullifying the agreement. At least, that's what Cogliostro says, and he's been fighting Old Mr. Pitchfork since he died in the Crusades. Equipped with a broad sword and chain mail, he helps Spawn learn to fully use his own futuristic body armor, which changes shapes and sprouts spikes or chains. **Best of all is a billowing scarlet cape that makes Batman's look like a hankie.** **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

When properly trained, Spawn confronts his former CIA boss, Jason Wynn (Martin Sheen), a megalomaniac who, duh, plans to take over the world. Unfortunately, Wynn's evildoer is a couple of watts short of a bulb. **For that matter, so is "Spawn" with its thicket of narrative, punctuated by repetitive action sequences.** **ORIGINALITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

The nonsensical screenplay can barely stand-up to the hellzapoppin,' Beelzebubbin' effects mustered by first-time director **Mark Dippe** **REGISSEUR**. The former F/X whiz isn't interested in telling a story, revealing character or creating a viable fictional universe. **All he cares about is blowing up stuff** **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. Like the Hooved One himself, all he cares about is the big bang.

With Sheen on board and the end of all we know in sight -- except the movie, of course -- they should have called it Apocalypse Pow!

Review 4:
Chicago Reader:
26-04-2007
Spawn

This hopelessly redundant action gross-out aspires to a form of hip vacuousness—and may achieve it. **ENTERTAINMENT** John Leguizamo, continuing the extended fart joke he began a series of roles ago, is verbally spry as usual **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT- HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**, stealing attention from the rest of the cast with more than just his gooey prosthetics. The usual superhero's etiology gives birth to Spawn, a former assassin (Michael Jai White) who's double-crossed by politician Martin Sheen in a typically villainous attempt at world domination. **Some soul selling that takes place in the cliched underworld** **ORIGINALITEIT** is supposed to account for all the high-tech transmogrification various characters undergo as they flex their powers, **but only the poetic unfurling of Spawn's flowing red cape is eye-catching enough to merit the screen time and energy** **SUBTILITEIT – GEBRUIK HAT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. With nothing up its sleeve but the kind of self-reference that's supposed to be funny just because it exists, this movie actually cuts to an impassive close-up of Sheen when Leguizamo mentions something about an "apocalypse—now." Directed by Mark Dippe; written by Alan McElroy based on the comic book by Todd MacFarlane.

By [Lisa Alspecter](#)

Review 5:
Cincinnati enquirer

Comic spinoff good enough to 'Spawn' sequel
BY [MARGARET A. McGURK](#)
[The Cincinnati Enquirer](#)

In the grand universe of film, *Spawn* ranks somewhere between "silly" and "not too bad."

Among horror movies about creatures from hell, it's a masterpiece **GEBRUIK HAT**.

The story, about a butt-kicking zombie with a conscience, comes from a comic book series by Todd McFarlane, who is credited as co-executive producer of the movie. **CONTEXT CBA**

The hero, born Al Simmons (Michael Jai White), is an ex-Marine turned paid assassin for a shadowy agency called A-6 who is murdered by his evil boss Jason Wynn (Martin Sheen). In hell, the devil picks Simmons to lead an apocalypse, renames him "Spawn" and sends him back to earth with armored skin.

That living armor is a key element in the story and one of the movie's most entertaining effects **ENTERTAINMENT**, sprouting spikes, weapons, grappling hooks and an awesome protective cape at will. **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

Spawn also gets a demonic guard-dian (John Leguizamo) in weird clown garb, a repulsive critter who gets the movie's funniest lines **HUMOR**. The humor is both a surprise and a saving grace that offsets the dreary histrionics inherent to horror flicks.

On earth, *Spawn* is heartbroken that his wife (Theresa Randle) has married his former partner (D.B. Sweeney). He consoles himself by trying to destroy Wynn. Complications hold *Spawn* back long enough for him to reject his deal with Satan and use his powers for good.

Mr. White, a karate expert who played boxer Mike Tyson in the HBO feature *Tyson* **FOCUS PERSOONLIJK LEVEN**, holds his own amid the madness as a superhero who can feel guilt and moral conflict as well as rage. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

The real star of this movie, of course, is its enormous array of elaborate special effects, **SUBTILITEIT** which sometimes run away from director Mark A.Z. Dippe.

Still, the story is considerably more coherent than we've come to expect from satanic horror movies, **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** and the characters exhibit signs of actual personality amid all the morphing and screaming and flames.

Spawn is a far from perfect movie, but interesting enough to make me look forward to the inevitable sequel.

5 offline reviews: blade

Review 1:

Snipes Plays Stylish Vampire Hunter in Well-Cut `Blade`

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Staff Critic
San Francisco Chronicle
Friday, August 21, 1998

Wesley Snipes' ``Blade'' has vampires, guns with silver bullets and pale bodies that blister and explode in the sun. It has big acting, big effects and enough big noise and quick cutting to scare off anyone not used to going to the movies these days. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL

Yet don't dismiss ``Blade'' as a typical thriller or as some kind of inflated style piece -- there's more than that going on. Big as it is, ``Blade'' is meticulous and subtle, not just in its camera technique but in the way it works its themes and creates a mood. SUBTILITEIT

I love the way director Stephen Norrington REGISSEUR uses odd little one- and two-second shots. Sometimes he does it to convey information. For example, he suggests that a woman might be turning into a vampire by giving us a split-second, overexposed shot of the street as seen through her eyes. Are her eyes getting sensitive to bright light, by any chance?

Other times Norrington will throw in a shot for no reason except that it has a subconscious rightness. A brief flash of a young blond vampire baring her teeth ends one sequence. The shot is sexy, scary and weird SPANNING/SUSPENS- COMPLEXITEIT, and it comes out of nowhere. ``Blade'' feels like a piece. It feels like the director was in tune with the material and knew what he was doing.

The main thing Norrington was doing was making nice, fat, industrial-sized pop entertainment, and he compromises nothing on that score. ``Blade,'' which opens today, is based on the Marvel Comics series. It's about a stalker of vampires (Snipes) who has some vampire blood himself, which gives him special powers. CONTEXT CBA

Vampires can run faster and jump higher, but their most interesting quality is their eyesight. Like a bird, they're capable of processing visual information faster than we can. That's why, when the film shows things through a vampire's eyes, everything is speeded up and has a throbbing strobe effect. But when we see humans through the eyes of a vampire, they seem to be going in slow motion.

As Blade, Snipes looks great. What an outfit: black leather coat, leather vest, black sunglasses, Grace Jones hairstyle. Like Jean-Claude Van Damme, this is one action hero who is not going to let a life-and-death struggle with the forces of evil get in the way of his weekly salon appointments. I admire that. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT - SUBTILITEIT

Blade isn't feeling good, though. In addition to the physical complications having to do with vampire blood, he's emotionally screwed up COMPLEXITEIT. As an infant, he lost his mother to a vampire. The search for Mommy is an underlying motif and informs his relationship with Karen (N'Bushe Wright), a gorgeous hematologist he has to protect.

Stephen Dorff (``Blood and Wine,'' ``City of Industry''), who is getting very good at playing smirky young villains, is Deacon Frost, an up-and-coming vampire. In the world of ``Blade,'' vampires are a powerful, unseen influence on every aspect of human society. Too flamboyant to hide in the shadows, Frost wants to dominate humans.

The picture sets up a conflict between "pure-blood" establishment vampires and the decadent breed of youngsters who just want to pillage and have fun. While Blade is on a metaphorical search for Mom, Frost is out to kill Daddy.

The production design and cinematography -- beautiful sets, beautifully lit -- are worth special attention **SUBTILITEIT**. In the board room where the top vampires meet, everything is dark blue and shadowy, the faces pale and bluish. Everyone looks as if he could use a good meal.

Review 2:

Blade

BY ROGER EBERT / August 21, 1998
Chicago Sun-Times

At a time when too many movies are built from flat, TV-style visuals of people standing around talking, movies based on comic books represent one of the last best hopes for visionary filmmaking. It's ironic that the comics, which borrowed their early visual style from movies, should now be returning the favor. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

"Blade," starring [Wesley Snipes](#) as a killer of vampires who is engaged in an armageddon for possession of the Earth, is a movie that relishes high visual style. It uses the extreme camera angles, the bizarre costumes and sets, the exaggerated shadows, the confident cutting between long shots and extreme closeups. It slams ahead in pure visceral imagery. **SUBTILITEIT**
– **GEBRUIK HAT**

Of course anyone patiently attending the film in the hopes of a reasoned story line is going to be disappointed. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE** Better to see it in comic book terms, as an episode in a master-myth, in which even the most cataclysmic confrontation is not quite the end of things, because there has to be another issue next month. **COMPLEXITEIT** The story, like so many comic myths, involves ordinary people who are connected through a superhero to an occult universe that lurks beneath reality--or, as Blade tells a young human doctor, "The world you live in is just a sugar-coated topping. There is another world beneath it--the real world!" Blade, based on a Marvel Comics hero, is played by Snipes as a man on the border between human and vampire **CONTEXT CBA**. Blade's origination story: His mother was bitten by a vampire while pregnant, infecting her child, who lived in the streets until being adopted by a man named Whistler ([Kris Kristofferson](#)), who masterminds a lonely war against vampires. Now Blade, raised to manhood, is the spearhead of that battle, as vampires spread their influence through the major cities. One of their chief gathering grounds: secret after-hours dance clubs where victims are lured by the promise of forbidden thrills, only to be bitten and converted.

The movie is built around a series of major action scenes; the first one features an update of an old friend from 1970s Hong Kong movies, the flying guillotine **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – VERGELIJKING FILMS**. This is a knife-edged boomerang that spins, slices and returns to its owner. Very neat.

Blade encounters Dr. Karen Jensen ([N'Bushe Wright](#)), a blood specialist who has been bitten by a badly burned vampire brought in for emergency treatment. Can she be saved? He returns her to Whistler's secret lab for an injection of liquid garlic, which will give her a fighting chance. Blade himself lives under a daily reprieve; Whistler's serum keeps him on the human side, although he may be building up a resistance to it.

Arrayed against Blade are the forces of vampirism, represented by his arch-enemy Deacon Frost ([Stephen Dorff](#)), who's also half-human, half-vampire, who dreams of a final vampire uprising against humans, and world conquest. His rival within the vampire world is Dragonetti

(Udo Keir), a pure vampire who prefers the current arrangement under which vampires secretly control key organizations to safeguard their interests.

There is a lot of mythology underlying Frost's plans, including the evocation of an ancient vampire god who may return to lead the creatures in their final conquest **INTERPRETATIE**. The setting for the climactic scene is a phantasmagoric vampire temple where Blade must risk everything in a titanic showdown.

The movie, directed by **Stephen Norrington**, **REGISSEUR** is another in a recent group of New Line Cinema movies that combine comic book imagery, noir universes, and the visual heritage of German Expressionism; I'd rank it third after "Dark City" and "Spawn." This material is obviously moving in the direction of pure animation, which is the look it often tries to evoke, and there are some shots here that use f/x to evoke animation's freedom from gravity and other physical laws **ENTERTAINMENT**. Notice, for example, an unbroken shot where Blade takes Dr. Jensen in his arms and makes an improbable leap from a high window to a far rooftop. Can't be done--especially not with them seemingly floating down in midair to a safe landing **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**--but the dreamlike feel of escape is effective. **PARTICIPATIE GEVOEL**

Wesley Snipes understands the material from the inside out and makes an effective Blade because he knows that the key ingredient in any interesting superhero is not omnipotence, but vulnerability. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** There is always a kind of sadness underlying the personalities of the great superheroes, who have been given great knowledge and gifts but few consolations in their battle against evil. The fun all seems to be on the villain's side. By embodying those feelings, Snipes as Blade gives the movie that edge of emotion without which it would simply be special effects. Of course you have to bring something to it yourself, preferably a sympathy for the whole comic superhero ethos. This is the kind of movie that gets better the more you know about the genre.

Review 3:

Blade (1998)

FILM REVIEW; People Who Dance With Vampires May Find Thrills in a New Vein

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

New York Times

Published: August 21, 1998

So much fake blood drips, gushes, explodes and congeals in "Blade" **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, a hyperkinetic science-fiction horror film inspired by a popular comic book, that there's hardly a scene that isn't drenched in red **CONTEXT CBA**. The crimson tide first rises in the movie's opening (and wittiest scene **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**) in which a young man is escorted by a sinister-looking woman in a red wig into a disco hidden behind a metal door in the back of a meatpacking plant.

As the frenzied dancers gyrate to a crunching industrial beat, a sign suddenly lights up announcing a "blood bath." The music intensifies, and shower heads on the ceiling begin spewing blood onto the ecstatic crowd whose heads strain upward to suck in the precious

liquid. Just when the horrified visitor realizes he has been lured into a vampire club having its Saturday night orgy, he is overcome by gnashing fangs.

Then who should arrive, spreading panic among the revelers, but an ominous figure dressed in black leather ludicrously embellished with what look like automobile seat belts **SUBTILITEIT**. This avenging vampire buster, who starts blowing the orgiasts to smithereens, is none other than Blade (Wesley Snipes), a semihuman warrior whose life is dedicated to eliminating the night-walking species that claimed his beloved mother moments before she gave birth to him.

"Blade," directed by Stephen Norrington **REGISSEUR** from a screenplay by David S. Goyer, obviously wants to be the first of many episodes of a low-rent "Batman"-style series. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Although the opening scene suggests a dark urban satire **INTERPRETATIE**, "Blade" quickly turns into a cartoonish futuristic action-adventure yarn in which Blade is the only thing keeping humanity from being exterminated by vampires in a hematological holocaust. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

The movie is awash not only in blood, but in the demons' mythical arcana as well. The battle scenes are pure comic-book derring-do replete with acrobatics borrowed from Hong Kong action thrillers and continual morphing. **ORIGINALITEIT** When a vampire is destroyed, it can go through one of several transformations. Sometimes it is shredded into a cinder. At other times, it bloats into a grotesquely contorted balloon that explodes with a sickening splat. Or it can turn into a miniature skeleton whizzing around in a hellish spirit world.

The story pits a trio of good guys -- Blade; his broken-down scraggly-haired human mentor, Abraham Whistler (Kris Kristofferson), and Karen (N'Bushe Wright), a resourceful hematologist -- against the forces of evil. Leading the bad guys is wiry, sneering Deacon Frost (Stephen Dorff), a rancid hippie-style rebel who wants to overthrow the fussy over-cautious vampiric old guard and get down to the business of world domination.

In one of the nastiest scenes, he and his fellow rebels, wearing suits that protect them from the sun, lead the senior leader to a beach where they yank out his fangs with pliers and gleefully watch as the rising sun decomposes him. **SPANNING/SUSPENS**

Mr. Snipes, who is an extremely limited actor, seems to have finally found a role in which he appears comfortable **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. All he has to do here is look enigmatically heroic and occasionally get roaring mad.

Review: 4
'Blade': A Cut Below

By Rita Kempley

Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, August 21, 1998

"Blade" is a vulgar attempt to revamp the undead genre by introducing computer-generated splatter and a casketful of themes from genetic tinkering to conspiracy theories. ORIGINALITEIT - ENTERTAINMENT

It seems we're being bled to death by big business and big government because they're run by a trilateral commission of vampires. But the execution here, however darkly stylish, never lives up to the metaphor's rich promise. SUBTILITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF The time-honored quest for the ultimate hickey, it's not.

Director Stephen Norrington REGISSEUR ("Death Machine") sets a grinding pace that's amplified by Blade (Wesley Snipes), the stone-faced half-vampire, half-human hero. But who needs comic relief when the apocalyptic blood tide is rising?

Certainly not Blade, who is sworn to defend humanity and to destroy the night stalkers, one of whom infected him with vampirism while he was still in his human mother's womb.

Though his primary weapon is his trusty silver sword, Blade's arsenal includes everything from hypodermics of garlic serum to an ultraviolet vampire toaster. The only thing that doesn't work anymore is the crucifix, although the filmmakers do not hesitate to dress up this morbid comic book melodrama with chalices and other sacred artifacts. And certainly Blade himself seems a messianic savior.

Deacon Frost (Stephen Dorff), his yuppified arch-nemesis, is about to compound the vampire threat by invoking La Magra, the ancient blood god. But he must first trap Blade and anoint the god's altar with his powerful mutant blood. Whatever.

Though Blade's enemies are legion, he does have a pair of resourceful allies. Kris Kristofferson, as a crusty old biker out to avenge his family, is his sidekick. And N'bushe Wright, as a recently bitten hematologist, is his other sidekick. She is working to find an anti-vampire serum for herself and Blade, who is losing the battle against his vampire side. The thirst is upon him.

Will the suckheads prevail? If so, will they be able to walk by day without wearing sunblock? Or will Blade prevent the imminent bloodbath? How much blood can you squeeze from a turnip?

"Blade" makes one long for Count Dracula's old-world manners and gallows drolleries. But they have no place in this dreary neo-Gothic play on I'm-gonna-git-you-sucka. The count would be rolling in his grave if only there weren't a stake in his heart. ENTERTAINMENT

Review 5:

Blade

Dennis Harvey

Variety

18-04-2007

The edge is off "Blade," which toplines Wesley Snipes as a Marvel Comics-derived vampire slayer. Though slick and diverting in some aspects, increasingly silly pic has trouble meshing disparate elements -- horror, superhero fantasy, straight-up action **CONTEXT CBA** -- into a workable whole. It also problematically lurches between a sort of "Mortal Kombat" appeal and vague attempts at grown-up weirdness, never quite realizing either **VERGELIJKING FILMS – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. Thrown into a marketplace already crowded with waning summer actioners, the New Line release is likely to experience a fast dropoff after hale but unspectacular opening numbers. Ancillary life may be brighter.

Prologue, set in 1967, shows a dying pregnant woman being rushed into the emergency room. We later discover she was vampire-bitten, but the umbilical cord is cut before the infant can be fully infected. Thus, the titular hero grows up carrying characteristics of both undead and mortals: He has extraordinary physical strength and a hunger for blood (which he suppresses via special serum), but his human conscience renders him an ace vampire hunter.

The post-credit setpiece is far and away the film's best. A young man who can't believe his luck is taken to a secret dance club by the sexy woman who's picked him up. Patrons are a tad on the scary-surlly side, though, and things look a lot worse once fire-safety sprinklers on the ceiling give everyone a literal "blood bath." Fangs are soon bared. In the nick, the lad is saved by the sudden appearance of Blade -- Snipes in a sort of black leather Robocop ensemble. Latter proceeds to variously shoot (silver ammo), stake and otherwise kill the enraged blood-suckers.

But when the cops arrive, they take aim at Blade, revealing that certain authorities have an agreement with the vampire colony so long as they stay "underground." Protag flees, leaving behind a charred undead man. When this figure is delivered to the morgue, he provides an unpleasant surprise for hematologist Karen (N'Bushe Wright) and her ex-boyfriend co-worker (Tim Guinee).

Wounded Karen is taken by Blade to the warehouse lair he shares with grizzled mortal Whistler (Kris Kristofferson), his loyal partner in creature-killing. Essence-of-garlic injection repairs her for the time being, but she still may "turn" -- i.e., go Dracula -- if the infection wins out.

Those ghoulish eatery-cum-discos are the brainchild of young Turk vampire Frost (Stephen Dorff). He and his coterie of punk/biker-style "suckheads" are much frowned upon by a corporate old guard led by Dragonetti (Udo Kier). Vampires have survived for centuries by keeping a low profile; Frost wants to rock the boat and instigate a full-fledged "vampire apocalypse."

With the pasty-faced crowd still after her, Karen must stick around Blade and Whistler as they seek out and destroy undead strongholds. Blade and Frost soon recognize each other as primary adversaries.

Scenarist David S. Goyer ("Dark City") and director Stephen Norrington **REGISSEUR** (an f/x and mu-sicvid vet whose sole prior feature was the low-budget '94 "Death Machine") create a lineup of hyperbolic action sequences that encompass everything from kickboxy martial arts to often gory, supernatural effects. **GEBRUIK HAT – FOCUS SPEKTAKEL** (Allowing for their fantastical nature, the digital images here are still none too convincing -- they sometimes call to mind Ray Harryhausen's old "Sinbad" monsters, albeit in a more freakish vein.) **SUBTILITEIT-VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The filmmakers don't manage much genuine suspense, sustained atmosphere, cumulative excitement or a sense that the story is headed anywhere in particular **SPANNING/SUSPENS - ENTERTAINMENT**. There's some mumbo-jumbo about an ancient prophecy and the resurrection of a dreaded Blood God. But it all comes down to rather routine take-this-no-take-this combat betwixt Blade and Frost. Already-sloppy plot logic starts snapping the tether entirely in final 45 minutes or so **ORIGINALITEIT**.

Overall, story isn't very satisfying, though it's never quite dull. Production design is enhanced by a widescreen look that, with its sleek blue/black emphasis, **resembles a less baroque variation of Batman's Gotham City**. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** Techno music lends film a certain edge, albeit one never again so fully realized as in that opening club seg.

"Blade" takes itself too seriously **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** without providing any emotional thread to hang onto. **Minimal comic relief falls flat** **HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID**. There's a surprising dearth of sexploitation, yet Wright's rather monotone turn doesn't add much romantic frissons, either.

Cast as a standard, iron-jawed superhero (one whose powers and vulnerabilities might be better explained), Snipes gets to show off muscular athleticism; his considerable acting chops and charm, however, go untapped. Dorff sneers competently.

His vampire playmates (including Traci Lords) look kinky but aren't given much of interest to do. Dialogue here often skirts the ridiculous, and Kristofferson shoulders more than his fair share.

Tech package is high-gloss. But this hoped-for franchise kickoff (drawn from Marvel Comics' first black-hero serial, begun in 1973) seems unlikely to earn spinoffs, unless they're direct-to-vid.

5 offline reviews: From hell

Review 1:

From Hell

BY ROGER EBERT / October 19, 2001

Chicago Sun-Times

One day men will say I gave birth to the 20th century. -- Dialogue by Jack the Ripper I'd like to think Darwin has a better case, but I see what he means. The century was indeed a stage for the dark impulses of the soul, and recently I've begun to wonder if Jack didn't give birth to the 21st century, too. Twins. During 10 weeks in autumn 1888, a serial killer murdered five prostitutes in the Whitechapel area of London. The murders were linked because the Ripper left a trademark, surgically assaulting the corpses in a particularly gruesome way. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK. "I look for someone with a thorough knowledge of human anatomy," says Inspector Abberline of Scotland Yard. An elementary knowledge would have been sufficient. The story of Jack the Ripper has been fodder for countless movies and books, and even periodic reports that the mystery has been "solved" have failed to end our curiosity. Now comes "From Hell," a rich, atmospheric film by the Hughes Brothers REGISSEUR ("Menace II Society"), who call it a "ghetto film," although knowledge of film, not the ghetto, is what qualifies them.

Johnny Depp stars as Inspector Frederick Abberline, an opium addict whose smoke-fueled dreams produce psychic insights into crime. The echo of Sherlock Holmes, another devotee of the pipe, is unmistakable, and "From Hell" supplies its hero with a Watsonoid sidekick in Peter Godley (Robbie Coltrane), a policeman assigned to haul Abberline out of the dens, gently remind him of his duty, protect him from harm, and marvel at his insights. Depp plays his role as very, very subtle comedy--so droll he hopes we think he's serious. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

The movie feels dark, clammy and exhilarating. SUBTILITEIT--it's like belonging to a secret club where you can have a lot of fun but might get into trouble. There's one extraordinary shot that begins with the London skyline, pans down past towers and steam trains, and plunges into a subterranean crypt where a Masonic lodge is sitting in judgment on one of its members. SUBTILITEIT. You get the notion of the robust physical progress of Victoria's metropolis, and the secret workings of the Establishment. At a time when public morality was strict and unbending, private misbehavior was a boom industry. Many, perhaps most, rich and pious men engaged in private debauchery.

The Hughes Brothers plunge into this world, so far from their native Detroit, with the joy of tourists who have been reading up for years. Their source is a 500-page graphic novel (i.e., transcendent comic book) by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, and some of their compositions look influenced by comic art, with its sharp obliques and exaggerated perspectives. The movie was shot on location with the medieval streets of Prague doubling for London, and production designer Martin Childs goes for lurid settings, saturated colors, deep shadows, a city of secret places protected by power and corruption.

We meet some of the prostitutes, particularly Mary Kelly (Heather Graham), who is trying to help her sisters escape from the dominance of the pimps. We see Abberline and Kelly begin a romance that probably would have been a lot more direct and uncomplicated at that time than it is in this movie. COMPLEXITEIT. We see members of Victoria's immediate family implicated in whoring and venereal mishaps, and we meet the Queen's Surgeon, a precise and, by his own admission, brilliant man named Sir William Gull (Ian Holm). The investigation is interrupted from time to time by more murders, graphically indicated, and by forms of official murder, like lobotomy. Sir William is an especially enthusiastic advocate of that procedure, reinforcing my notion that every surgeon of any intelligence who practiced lobotomy did so

with certain doubts about its wisdom, and certain stirrings of curious satisfaction.

Watching the film, I was surprised how consistently it surprised me ORIGINALITEIT. It's a movie "catering to no clear demographic," Variety reports in its review, as if catering to a demographic would be a good thing for a movie to do. Despite its gothic look, "From Hell" is not in the Hammer horror genre. Despite its Sherlockian hero, it's not a Holmes and Watson story. Despite its murders, it's not a slasher film. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF What it is, I think, is a Guignol about a cross-section of a thoroughly rotten society, corrupted from the top down. The Ripper murders cut through layers of social class designed to insulate the sinners from the results of their sins.

Review 2:

From Hell (2001)

FILM REVIEW; A Conspiracy Shrouded in London Fog

By ELVIS MITCHELL

New York Times

Published: October 19, 2001

The opening of the Hughes Brothers' film REGISSEUR "From Hell," a heady snort of paranoia about the trail of terror left by Jack the Ripper, gets its tone not only from the mordant graphic novel by the writer Alan Moore and the artist Eddie Campbell but from a surprising source CONTEXT CBA: Sergio Leone, the Italian director. "From Hell" is shot in the wide-screen expanse that he favored VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS.

The movie is bracketed with a plot device lifted from Leone's "Once Upon a Time in America" VERGELIJKING FILMS: the detective, Inspector Abberline (Johnny Depp), is flat on his back in an opium den, inhaling a transporting hookah of the stuff. Ashen and stricken, Abberline exhales murky plumes of smoke as his head fills with visions of mayhem. This is how he tracks down the killer; through a verdant haze, he sees the victims as they're being slaughtered.

This scene is the filmmakers' first big departure from the comic book, which begins with a revealing epilogue CONTEXT CBA - ORIGINALITEIT. This twist gives the film a jolt of moviemaking power. It is one of the many ways that the directors, the twins Allen and Albert Hughes, find to complement, and then top, the apocalyptic narrative weaving that Mr. Moore is best at. COMPLEXITEIT (He wrote such entertaining nightmares as "The Watchmen," with essentially the Justice League of America starring in the Book of Revelations.)

The directors set the stage by plunging their camera's focus from the rooftop of a building down to the cobblestone bowels of London's streets (in this case sublimely evoked through Prague locations and re-creations of the city). They put us on the express elevator to the netherworld with dizzying quickness.

"From Hell" -- its title comes from a phrase in a taunting note penned by the Ripper to the police -- is also extraordinarily violent, in addition to being one of the most breathtaking leaps

of directing skills I've seen in years **GEBRUIK HAT**. It follows the dogged investigation of Abberline and his partner, Sergeant Godley (Robbie Coltrane), in trying to stop the bloody carnage by the East End's most famous criminal.

Jack the Ripper stalks a group of prostitutes, and the streets teem with life and misery as the women struggle to make enough money to keep them safe from the extortionate muscle of the Nichols Street Gang. So many knives are bared that it's nearly impossible to tell who may actually be Jack the Ripper.

Although Abberline's pursuit points him toward the Nichols Gang, there is the possibility that the unusual precision of the killer's knife is the product of an educated mind. Sir William Gull (Ian Holm), a physician and confidant of the royal family, takes an interest in Abberline's work and tries to help. And Abberline takes an interest in the independent-minded Mary Kelly (Heather Graham), the copper-haired prostitute who tries to keep the group of women together while their ranks are meticulously thinned by the Ripper.

The movie succeeds, but it does have its faults – **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**- the attempt to weld social melodrama and suspense creaks at some of the joints **INTERPRETATIE – SPANNING/SUSPENS**. But the Hughes Brothers' goal here is to make an epic of savagery, and they are brilliant at ambience and details. **SUBTILITEIT**

Like Mr. Moore, the Hughes Brothers are interested in large-scale paranoid fantasies, though they work closer to the real world. Although a period film set in late-Victorian London might initially seem outside their purview, what else is the Jack the Ripper tale but a tableau of urban violence, filled with characters who don't know where to turn? The tale is the European antecedent of the Hughes Brothers' "Menace II Society" and "Dead Presidents. **VERGELIJKING FILMS"**

"From Hell" comes with voluminous footnotes, in which Mr. Moore cites "Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution, **CONTEXT CBA**" a grim compilation of facts by Stephen Knight. Yet movie aficionados may recognize the plot from the 1979 suspense-shocker "Murder by Decree," which suggests a conspiracy linking a high-born British nobleman to the Ripper. In "Murder," Sherlock Holmes is set loose after Jack, and he is led to places that send shivers through his hound's-tooth deerstalker.

What "From Hell" offers is a sensual trek, in which the directors display a loamy elegance that alarms as much as the arterial sprays from the victims **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. The cinematographer Peter Deming supplies a palette of grays, blacks and muddy browns that are alleviated by not only many shades of red -- at one point, even the nocturnal cloud cover is tinged with crimson -- but also a wealth of greens. **SUBTILITEIT**

Mr. Deming brings these colors together near the end for a promise of hope. But the greens also spell danger, like absinthe green as Abberline prepares a drug-filled cocktail unlikely to

appear in an ad for Absolut. Abberline then sets the mix aflame, and downs it. The detective has to keep his head in the clouds to deaden his pain. (It's as if Abberline, in relentlessly chasing the dragon, is picking up the drug habits of Holmes that Sherlock wasn't allowed in "Murder by Decree.")

"From Hell" is so beautifully realized as a mood piece that it takes a while for a slight disappointment to register. The movie isn't as scary as you'd like it be, and the mix of its elements don't quite take **SPANNING/SUSPENS - ENTERTAINMENT**.

And frankly, a movie is bound to be unsettling if its subject matter includes a monarchy that deemed prostitutes expendable and a society steeped in class consciousness and racism, **INTERPRETATIE** despite the smart adaptation of Mr. Moore's chilly original by Terry Hayes and Rafael Yglesias.

Ms. Graham's prostitute is nearly as detached as Mr. Moore is; she also struggles with the accent, which slips away from her at times. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** The rest of the cast gives the movie life. The Hughes Brothers could certainly have done worse than Robbie Coltrane -- this comic talent who took his surname from the improvisational sax genius registers with his own genius, and his burly, mussed soulfulness is a gift from heaven for the movie.

HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID – GEBRUIK HAT Mr. Holm's pearly empathy sits well, too, and there is fine work from many of the other supporting actors.

Mr. Depp, taking on a role with surface similarities to his leads in "Sleepy Hollow" and other recent films, makes Abberline a tormented man of action, soaked in every mind-altering substance available. He wants to keep his head in the clouds but is compelled to divine the truth. Part of the movie's drollery is that Mr. Depp is probably prettier than the hookers he is questioning, and that his need to play against his looks is so strong that it translates into a separate undercurrent of ferocity. (His comic skills are almost as spirited as Mr. Coltrane's.) He's game, as are all the elements in "From Hell," **a conspiracy-theory thriller with brains and a heart** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**.

"From Hell" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian) for all the elements a Jack the Ripper story might suggest: violence, rivers of blood, strong language, nudity and drug consumption by the hero.

Review 3: 'From Hell'

The Hughes brothers re-create the famously grisly murders in detail. But what's the payoff in witnessing them?

By Kenneth Turan, Times Film Critic
Los Angeles Times
19-10-01

While we've all seen motion pictures that are simplistic comic-book versions of sophisticated novels, "From Hell" is something different: a pared-down comic-book version of an actual comic book. No, that is not progress. **CONTEXT CBA - ORIGINALITEIT**

The Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell take on 19th century London's Jack the Ripper murders is, of course, no mere comic book. It's a massive, graphic novel published over the course of a decade and so fiendishly researched and detailed it has more than 40 pages of footnotes in small print **CONTEXT CBA**. Both the book and the film, directed by the Hughes brothers **REGISSEUR** and starring Johnny Depp and Heather Graham, share a fascination with the grisly particulars of the Ripper's murders of five prostitutes, though those bloody doings are considerably more unpleasant to experience on film than in black-and-white line drawings, no matter how artfully done. **SUBLITEIT**

That's not fair, lovers of cinematic gore will complain **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**. No one is going to venture into a movie about Jack the Ripper directed by the people who brought you "Menace II Society" and "Dead Presidents" expecting "Sense and Sensibility." After all, what's one more graphically slit throat among friends? Still, it is deeply unpleasant to see women abducted, tortured and eviscerated by a methodical and meticulous butcher **ENTERTAINMENT**. Even more unhappy is the work's fanaticism about re-creating that savagery (albeit in fleeting glimpses) as precisely as modern special-effects technology allows. Here is a film that is thoroughly pleased with itself for getting use of extremely rare murder-scene photos and coroner reports that revealed, a technician confides, "the location, size and depth of the incisions, all very minute in detail." The result, the press material boasts, were dummies "so startlingly realistic that few of the actresses wanted to view them." Now that's really something to be proud of. **SUBLITEIT- FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**

On the surface, 1888 London, even as re-created in Prague, is a major change of scene for the Hughes brothers, whose previous films have been set in modern urban locales. But "From Hell's" Whitechapel area turns out to have a lot in common with those neighborhoods in terms of poverty, violence and even drug use. In fact, police inspector Fred Abberline (Depp) is introduced preparing for his periodic ingestion of opium, a drug he supplements with generous quantities of absinthe and laudanum. It's all in a good cause, though: The inspector's hallucinogenic visions turn out to help him see crimes before they are committed.

The Ripper murders especially demand his attention and bring him in contact with a chummy group of prostitutes the maniac seems especially eager to eliminate. Prettiest among these is red-haired Mary Kelly (Graham), initially resistant to all authority figures but soon smitten by the inspector's sleepy-eyed charisma. Also helping out in the investigation is Sir William Gull (the always effective Ian Holm) **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, the royal family's personal physician. He takes a professional interest in a murderer who seems to have more than a casual knowledge of anatomy and the principles of medical dissection.

Though the graphic novel tells us who the Ripper is almost at once, "From Hell" turns that story into a detective yarn, alternating scenes of the inspector tracing down clues and Jack, his face never seen, committing increasingly stomach-turning homicides **ORIGINALITEIT**.

Violence, of course, is not new to the Hughes brothers' films, but in "Menace" and "Presidents" there was an additional level of involving social criticism that gave us a reason to endure the mayhem. Here, the film is considerably more off-putting than what it gives back.

The Hughes brothers, working from a script by Terry Hayes and Rafael Yglesias, probably think they've covered that base. There's considerable huffing and puffing involving class prejudice and hypocrisy, lots of xenophobic upper-crust bloviation of the "no well-bred man could do this" variety while it becomes increasingly clear to the inspector that that's just who was responsible **INTERPRETATIE**. Actually, "From Hell's" theory as to who the Ripper was and why he did what he did is an intriguing one, and could easily have made a much more palatable film on the order of the Nicole Kidman-starring "The Others" if palatable were something the

filmmakers were after VERGELIJKING FILMS - COMPLEXITEIT. Clearly, it was not. In fact, the only regret the Hughes brothers seem to have, if their frequent interviews are any measure, is that they didn't make this film even more gruesome.

"There's still a part of me that goes, ... 'We sold out' because we didn't show all the blood POSITIEF/NEGATIEF," Albert Hughes told one journalist, while informing another: "If we had our way, we'd show all the gore. We'd be satisfied, but it would pretty much end us in Hollywood." If this is the kind of film they're going to be making, maybe that's a fair trade.

Review 4:

You Don't Know Jack

Will Johnny Depp's dope-addled detective get to Heather Graham before Jack the Ripper does? Will Billy Bob get to Cate Blanchett before Bruce does?

[Add a Comment](#)

- By [Peter Rainer](#)
New York Magazine
29-10-01

In **From Hell**, Johnny Depp plays an opium-addicted police inspector on the trail of Jack the Ripper. This is a far cry from that gypsy-bursting-with-the-life-force role he's been doing to death lately, but maybe not far enough. Whether he's gypsy or gent, Depp never quite seems to be taking part in his movies. Most of the time, he looks glazed over with soulful blahs FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Rooting out clues in working-class Whitechapel, Depp's Inspector Abberline pauses over the eviscerated body of a prostitute to pick up a grape stem. Aha! Since grapes are a delicacy, the Ripper must be a wealthy man, he surmises. This is about as challenging as it gets for Abberline, who soon finds himself enmeshed in machinations involving Freemasonry and the British royal family. Isn't it time for the royals to stop taking the rap for the Ripper? Co-directors Allen and Albert Hughes REGISSEUR based *From Hell* on a graphic novel by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell CONTEXT CBA, but the film is like a lush version of the old Hammer horror flicks or Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe movies. VERGELIJKING FILMS – VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS

The only thrill POSITIEF/NEGATIEF, if you can call it that, is waiting to see who gets sliced up next FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. The Hughes brothers make it easy to keep a scorecard: They introduce each potential hooker victim with just enough characterization to let you know she's in the on-deck circle. (*Don't eat the grapes.*) Heather Graham, who despite her henna-red tresses here seems as wholesome as Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, plays the hooker who puts a tiny dent in Abberline's cast-iron funk. Her perfect teeth would be out of place in the mouth of a modern-day Londoner, not to mention a malnourished prostitute from 1888. The only note of authenticity in the movie comes from Ian Holm, playing the royal physician SUBTILITEIT. What is this nuanced performance -- at least until the final fireworks -- doing in this twaddle? Holm looks like he'd be happier playing the Anthony Hopkins role in *The Elephant Man*, but amid all the garish hoopla and clumsily staged cavorting and bad Cockney accents, his underplaying is a balm. You have to put up with a lot these days to get at a good performance.

Review 5:
Cold day in 'HELL'

Jack the Ripper mystery skillfully evokes Victorian London's dark depths

Bob Graham, Chronicle Senior Writer

Friday, October 19, 2001
San Francisco Chronicle

The streets are thick with sympathetic prostitutes and cruddy with the smell of urine. No, it's not the Tenderloin but a darkly textured evocation, **by the Hughes twins REGISSEUR**, of Victorian London. They can make you see a smell.

"From Hell" -- Jack the Ripper's return address -- offers audiences a walk on the wild side without leaving the comfort and safety of stadium seating. This is Whitechapel lowlife seen from the top layer of society -- which, of course, is what makes it lowlife and attractive. Lowlifes don't see it that way.

"From Hell" stars Johnny Depp, accompanied, as always, by ambiguity. Prince of decadence Depp, playing a London police inspector, is first seen through an opium haze brought on by a toke from a pipe and given a buzz by a dash of laudanum in absinthe.

Telling, graphic detail and complex characterizations are just two of the layers Albert and Allen Hughes ("Menace II Society") bring to the horror- mystery, a genre not associated with them. It will be now. It is a knuckle- gnaw. It restores chill to an earlier meaning. **SUBTILITEIT – SPANNING/SUSPENS**

"From Hell" is a retelling, based on the Allan Moore graphic novel, of the gruesome serial killings of prostitutes that preoccupied London tabloids in 1888 **CONTEXT CBA**. The scope of this version, presenting as fiction what has been offered previously as theory, stretches all the way to Buckingham Palace and an exclusive secret society.

Many characters in this story, including Jack the Ripper, lead double lives,

and that extends to Inspector Frank Abberline (Depp), whose reputation for brilliant deductions is based, some believe, on opium-induced visions.

The methodical dissection of the victims leads Abberline to consult Sir William Gull (Ian Holm) on medical matters. Heather Graham, with her wide-set eyes and flaming hair, is one of the "unfortunate women" who cross Abberline's path. London actress Katrin Cartlidge ("Breaking the Waves") plays the prostitute Annie, and Robbie Coltrane is a cynical police sergeant.

When Sir William notices Abberline's knowledge of laudanum, he observes that not many would recognize it except "doctors and addicts." This medical expert sees into himself, too, when he refers to "the surgeon's disability: want of feeling."

Abberline's problem is the exact opposite, although he has a dark streak. If **Depp's accent is Cockney**, it is a low-key Cockney. Sensitive, too. Audience members who share that characteristic may find the discomfort level in "From Hell" too much to sit through. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT – SUBTILITEIT – ENTERTAINMENT – VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

There are naked bodies stretched out dead and alive. Barbarism extends to the medical theater, where new and admired medical treatments include a skull- puncturing technique. "From Hell" has a **fascination with the shiny steel of medical instruments not seen in a film since**

David Cronenberg's "Dead Ringers VERGELIJKING FILMS." Also under scientific observation is the grotesque "elephant man" John Merrick, contrasted in a single shot with the dark physicality of Depp.

As presented here, there is the upper-class notion that all England's troubles come from abroad. Grape-eating snobs are suspicious of "socialists, Jews and foreigners" and have no inhibitions about saying so. Significant lore makes an impact. We learn that coins are used to cover the eyes of the dead "to pay the ferryman" across the Styx.

Abberline, who thinks the killings are ritual murders, is so well known for both opiates and uncanny CSI that there is a damaging rumor that "he dreams the answers." The inspector is in good company. Sherlock Holmes, after all, was addicted to cocaine ("The Seven Per Cent Solution").

When Abberline gets too hot on the trail, he is assaulted by well-connected agents and told to find a scapegoat -- ordered, really. He is suspended and "all his privileges" are canceled.

"I won't arrest him," Abberline vows of the mad killer, "but I will stop him."

5 Offline reviews: Road to perdition

Review 1:

Road To Perdition

BY ROGER EBERT / July 12, 2002

Chicago Sun-Times

"Road to Perdition" is like a Greek tragedy, dealing out remorseless fates for all the characters. Some tragedies, like "[Hamlet](#)," are exhilarating, because we have little idea how quirks of character will bring about the final doom. But the impact of Greek tragedy seems muted to me, because it's preordained. Since "Road to Perdition" is in that tradition, it loses something. It has been compared to "[The Godfather](#)," but "[The Godfather](#)" was about characters with free will, and here the characters seem to be performing actions already long since inscribed in the books of their lives. VERGELIJKING FILMS

Yet the movie has other strengths to compensate for the implacable progress of its plot POSITIEF/NEGATIEF. It is wonderfully acted. And no movie this year will be more praised for its cinematography; Conrad L. Hall's work seems certain to win the Academy Award SUBTILITEIT. He creates a limbo of darkness, shadow, night, fearful faces half-seen, cold and snow. His characters stand in downpours, the rain running off the brims of their fedoras and soaking the shoulders of their thick wool overcoats. Their feet must always be cold. The photography creates a visceral chill GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE.

The story involves three sets of fathers and sons--two biological, the third emotional--and shows how the lives they lead make ordinary love between them impossible. [Tom Hanks](#) plays Michael Sullivan, an enforcer for the Rock Island branch of the Chicago mob, circa 1931. [Tyler Hoechlin](#) plays his son Michael Jr., a solemn-eyed 12-year-old. After his brother Peter asks "What does dad do for a job?" Michael Jr. decides to find out for himself. One night he hides in a car, goes along for the ride, and sees a man killed. Not by his father, but what difference does it make? Sullivan works for John Rooney ([Paul Newman](#)), the mob boss, who is trim and focused and uses few words. John's son Connor ([Daniel Craig](#)) is a member of the mob. Sullivan finds out that Connor has been stealing from his father, and that sets up the movie's emotional showdown, because Sullivan thinks of John like his own father, and John speaks of Sullivan as a son. "Your mother knows I love Mr. Rooney," Michael Sr. tells his son. "When we had nothing, he gave us a home." Men who name their sons after themselves presumably hope the child will turn out a little like them. This is not the case with Michael Sr., who has made a pact with evil in order to support his wife ([Jennifer Jason Leigh](#)) and two boys in comfort.

Unlike Rooney, he doesn't want his son in the business. The movie's plot asks whether it is possible for fathers to spare their sons from the costs of their sins. It also involves sons who feel they are not the favorite. "Did you like Peter better than me?" Michael Jr. asks his father, after his little brother has been killed. And later Sullivan goes to see Mr. Rooney, and cannot understand why Rooney would protect his son Connor, who betrayed and stole from him, to his loyal employee who is "like a son." The movie is directed by [Sam Mendes](#) REGISSEUR, from a graphic novel by Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner, much revised by screenwriter [David Self](#) CONETXT CBA. This is only Mendes' second film, but recall that his first, "[American Beauty](#)," won Oscars in 1999 for best picture, director, actor, screenplay--and cinematography, by Conrad Hall. Both films involve men in family situations of unbearable pain, although the first is a comedy (of sorts) and this one certainly is not. Both involve a father who, by leading the life he chooses, betrays his family and even endangers them. Both involve men who hate their work.

The key relationships are between Hanks and Newman, and Hanks and Hoechlin, the newcomer who plays his son. Newman plays Rooney as a man who would prefer that as few

people be harmed as necessary, but he has an implacable definition of "necessary." He is capable of colorful Corleone-style sayings, as when he declares that his mob will not get involved in labor unions: "What men do after work is what made us rich. No need to screw them at work." Against this benevolence we must set his trade in booze, gambling and women, and his surgical willingness to amputate any associate who is causing difficulty.

FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

The Hanks character sees the good side of Rooney so willfully that he almost cannot see the bad. Even after he discovers the worst, he feels wounded more than betrayed. He's a little naive, and it takes Rooney, in a speech Newman delivers with harsh clarity, to disabuse him. Called a murderer, Rooney says: "There are only murderers in this room, Michael. Open your eyes. This is the life we chose. **COMPLEXITEIT** The life we lead. And there is only one guarantee--none of us will see heaven." Sullivan wants his son to see heaven, and that sets up their flight from Rooney justice. Father and son flee, pursued by a hit man ([Jude Law](#)) who supplements his income by selling photographs of the people he has killed. The plot all works out in an ending that may seem too neat, unless you reflect that in tragedy there is a place of honor for the deus ex machina -- **the god being lowered by the machinery of the plot into a scene that requires solution.** **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

I mentioned the rain. This is a water-soaked picture, with melting snow on the streets and dampness in every room. That gives Conrad Hall the opportunity to develop and extend one of his most famous shots. In "[In Cold Blood](#)" (1967), he has a closeup of [Robert Blake](#), as a convicted killer on the night of his death. He puts Blake near a window, and lights his face through the windowpane, as raindrops slide down the glass. The effect is of tears on his face. In "Road to Perdition," the light shines through a rain-swept window onto a whole room that seems to weep.

After I saw "Road to Perdition," I knew I admired it, but I didn't know if I liked it **ENTERTAINMENT**. I am still not sure. It is cold and holds us outside. Yes, there is the love of Hanks for his son, but **how sadly he is forced to express it.** **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE** The troubles of the mob seem caused because Rooney prefers family to good management, but Michael Sullivan's tragedy surely comes because he has put it the other way around--placing Rooney above his family. The movie shares with "[The Godfather](#)" the useful tactic of keeping the actual victims out of view. There are no civilians here, destroyed by mob activities. All of the characters, good and bad, are supplied from within the mob. But there is never the sense that any of these characters will tear loose, think laterally, break the chains of their fate. Choice, a luxury of the Corleones, is denied to the Sullivans and Rooneys, and choice or its absence is the difference between Sophocles and Shakespeare. I prefer Shakespeare **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**.

Review 2: HARD 'ROAD'

Hanks gets inside a killer's head in smart mob drama **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
Friday, July 12, 2002
San Francisco Chronicle

Muted and vivid. That's not the usual combination, but it describes "Road to Perdition," from its washed-out but distinct cinematography to its performances -- **subdued yet percolating with suppressed emotion** **COMPLEXITEIT**. Directed by Sam Mendes **REGISSEUR**, this movie might not be as flashy as his Oscar-winning "American Beauty," but it's a smarter film, more mature and emotionally honest. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** And Tom Hanks, who stars in it, is superb **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**.

Since day one this movie has been talked up as a departure for Hanks, in which he drops the nice-guy image and plays a hard case. That's almost true, but not quite. Hanks may play a hit man for a Depression-era Irish American mob, but he's a hit man who has his reasons. In a movie populated by immoral characters, he is the one who could most easily pass for a good guy.

Still, the novelty of seeing Hanks as a 1930s mobster is enough for an audience to get a new angle on the actor, ORIGINALITEIT and that's not only fun but also revealing -- what's revealing is that he doesn't look ridiculous. Instead, in a fedora and a bulky overcoat, Hanks looks like a beefy tough guy. Not Luca Brasi tough, but tough enough. SUBTILITEIT

For this movie Hanks also changes his familiar voice into a gangster growl, the kind of voice we've heard in every other mob movie ever made. But here's the thing: Hanks doesn't just do the voice. He makes psychological sense of it. COMPLEXITEIT

It's the voice of someone who knows he can't ever reveal his humanity, feelings or weaknesses. It's a voice with a clamp on it, a lonely person's voice.

He plays Mike Sullivan, a strong-arm man for Rooney, a mob boss played by Paul Newman. It's 1931, the year of "Little Caesar" and "The Public Enemy." A lot of people are on bread lines, but Mike, his wife (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and two sons enjoy a cozy middle-class existence, thanks to Rooney, with whom Mike has a father-son relationship.

One night Mike's comfortable but shaky existence is thrown forever off balance when he and Rooney's hotheaded son, Connor (Daniel Craig), go out on a job together. What's supposed to be a routine shakedown turns into a bloodbath.

Characteristic of the movie's quiet intelligence is that we see the bloodbath in long shot, from a single setup that matches the angle from which an unseen witness sees it. SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT - SUBTILITEIT. The witness is Mike's oldest son, Michael (Tyler Hoechlin), and from there a series of catastrophes is set in motion that puts Mike on the outs with his mob and fleeing, with Michael, for his life.

Newman, who has been playing too many crotchety geezers lately, finally gets a role that does justice to his gravity and presence. As Rooney, he's a picture of healthy old age, straight-backed and clear-eyed, but with the look of someone who has seen horrors. Like virtually everything else in "Road to Perdition," not much is on the surface of Newman's performance. Yet every moment is alive with what's underneath it -- the weight of a misspent life, of guilt, of the certainty of damnation.

These miseries of the spirit are what Rooney has passed on to Mike, and they're exactly what Mike doesn't want to pass on to Michael. Most of "Road to Perdition" takes place, appropriately enough, on the road, as Mike improvises a survival strategy and father and son slowly bond. The question "What does a father owe a son?" is ever-present, in the relationship of Connor and Rooney, Rooney and Mike, and Mike and Michael. Interpretatie The movie isn't so obvious as to offer a specific answer, because there isn't one. But the general idea is that the most important legacy is spiritual.

The screenplay (adapted by David Self from Max Allan Collins' graphic novel) looks for ways to make minor characters distinct. CONTEXT CBA. A bodyguard, who appears on screen for a minute, becomes a specific person. Dylan Baker has a nice featured role as a mob accountant who appears also to be a gay aesthete. And the usually dashing Jude Law plays a perverse hit man with dirty fingers and bad teeth -- a role Steve Buscemi might have considered too unbecoming.

"Road to Perdition" is a succession of fine scenes, most of them understated **GEBRUIK HAT**. Life-and-death conversations take place with no threats, as if the mobsters have all taken a course in management training. Yet always there's the gentle understanding that things can get very nasty indeed. **Without doubt, this is an unusual way of doing a mob movie, and the results are not nearly as lovable as those of Coppola or Scorsese.** **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**

Review 3:

Road to Perdition (2002)

FILM REVIEW; A Hell for Fathers and Sons

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

New York Times

Published: July 12, 2002

EARLY in "Road to Perdition," a period gangster film that achieves the grandeur of a classic **TIJDLOOSHEID** Hollywood western, John Rooney (Paul Newman), the crusty old Irish mob boss in a town somewhere outside Chicago, growls a lament that echoes through the movie like a subterranean rumble: "Sons are put on the earth to trouble their fathers."

Rooney is decrying the trigger-happy behavior of his corrupt, hot-headed son, Connor (Daniel Craig), who in a fit of paranoid rage impulsively murdered one of Rooney's loyal lieutenants. The ear into which Rooney pours his frustration belongs to Michael Sullivan (Tom Hanks), his personal hit man, who witnessed the killing. An orphan whom Rooney brought up as a surrogate son and who has married and fathered two boys, Sullivan is in some ways more beloved to Rooney than his own flesh and blood. He is certainly more trustworthy.

But as the film shows, Rooney's bitter observation about fathers and sons also works in reverse: fathers are eternal mysteries put on the earth to trouble their sons as well as teach them.

COMPLEXITEIT The story is narrated by the older of Sullivan's two boys, 12-year-old Michael Jr. (Tyler Hoechlin), who in a prologue establishes the movie's tone and setting (most of the events take place over six weeks in the winter of 1931) and invites us to decide, once his tale has been told, whether his father was "a decent man" or "no good at all."

"Road to Perdition," which opens today nationwide, is the second feature film directed by Sam Mendes, the British theatrical maestro who landed at the top of Hollywood's A-list with his cinematic debut, "American Beauty." **The new movie re-teams him with Conrad L. Hall, the brilliant cinematographer responsible for that film's surreal classicist shimmer** **SUBTILITEIT – GEBRUIK HAT.** **With "Road to Perdition" they have created a truly majestic visual tone poem** **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**, one that is so much more stylized than its forerunner that it inspires

a continuing and deeply satisfying awareness of the best movies as monumental "picture shows."

Because Sullivan is played by Mr. Hanks, an actor who invariably exudes conscientiousness and decency, his son's question lends the fable a profound moral ambiguity **COMPLEXITEIT**. "Road to Perdition" ponders some of the same questions as "The Sopranos," a comparably great work of popular art, **VERGELIJKING FILMS** whose protagonist is also a gangster and a devoted family man **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. But far from a self-pitying boor lumbering around a suburban basement in his undershirt, Mr. Hanks's antihero is a stern, taciturn killer who projects a tortured nobility. Acutely aware of his sins, Sullivan is determined that his son, who takes after him temperamentally, not follow in his murderous footsteps. Yet when driven to the brink, Sullivan gives his son a gun with instructions to use it, if necessary, and enlists him to drive his getaway car.

In surveying the world through Michael Jr.'s eyes, the movie captures, like no film I've seen, the fear-tinged awe with which young boys regard their fathers and the degree to which that awe continues to reverberate into adult life **ONTROERING**. Viewed through his son's eyes, Sullivan, whose face is half-shadowed much of the time by the brim of his fedora, is a largely silent deity, the benign but fearsome source of all knowledge and wisdom. An unsmiling Mr. Hanks does a powerful job of conveying the conflicting emotions roiling beneath Sullivan's grimly purposeful exterior as he tries to save his son and himself from mob execution. It's all done with facial muscles. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Yet Sullivan is also beholden to his own surrogate father, who has nurtured and protected him since childhood. Mr. Newman's Rooney, with his ferocious hawklike glare, sepulchral rasp and thunderous temper, has the ultimate power to bestow praise and shame, to bless and to curse. The role, for which the 77-year-old actor adopts a softened Irish brogue, is one of Mr. Newman's most farsighted, anguished performances.

What triggers the movie's tragic chain of events is Michael Jr.'s worshipful curiosity about his father. Desperate to see what his dad actually does for a living, he hides in the back of the car that Sullivan drives to the fatal meeting at which Connor goes haywire. After the boy is caught spying, Connor, who hates and envies Sullivan, decides without consulting Rooney that the boy can't be trusted to keep silent and must die. He steals into Sullivan's house and shoots his wife, Annie (Jennifer Jason Leigh), and his other son, Peter (Liam Aiken), mistaking Peter for Michael Jr., who returns on his bicycle as the murders are taking place.

Arriving home, Sullivan finds his surviving son sitting alone in the dark, and as the camera waits downstairs, Sullivan climbs to the second floor and discovers the bodies. As his world shatters,

all we hear is a far-off strangled cry of grief and horror. Minutes later he is frantically packing Michael Jr. into a car, and the two become fugitives, making one deadly stop before heading toward Chicago where Sullivan hopes to work for Frank Nitti (Stanley Tucci), Al Capone's right-hand man. For the rest of the movie, Sullivan plots his revenge on Connor, who remains secreted in a Chicago hotel room, protected by Rooney. Sullivan's plan involves a Robin Hood-style scheme of robbing banks but stealing only mob money.

The film, adapted from a comic-book novel by Max Allan Collins with illustrations by Richard Piers Rayner, portrays the conflicts as a sort of contemporary Bible story with associations to Abraham and Isaac, and Cain and Abel. The very word *perdition*, a fancy term for hell, is meant to weigh heavily, and it does. **CONTEXT CBA - INTERPRETATIE**

True to the austere moral code of classic westerns, the film believes in heaven and hell and in the possibility of redemption. In that spirit its characters retain the somewhat remote, mythic aura of figures in a western, and the movie's stately tone and vision of gunmen striding to their fates through an empty Depression-era landscape seems intentionally to recall "High Noon," "Shane" and "Unforgiven." When the characters speak in David Self's screenplay, their pronouncements often have the gravity of epigraphs carved into stone. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

A scary wild card slithering and hissing like a coiled snake through the second half of the film is Maguire (Jude Law), a ghoulish hit man and photojournalist with a fanatical devotion to taking pictures of dead bodies. When he opens fire, his cold saucer-eyed leer and bottled-up volatility explode into frenzied seizures that suggest a demonically dancing puppet. And just when you have almost forgotten the character, he reappears like an avenging fury.

The look of the film maintains a scrupulous balance between the pop illustration of a graphic novel **SUBTILITEIT** (Michael Jr. himself is shown reading one, "The Lone Ranger") and Depression-era paintings, especially the bare, desolate canvases of Edward Hopper. The camera moves with serene, stealthy deliberation (nothing is rushed or jagged), while the lighting sustains a wintry atmosphere of funereal gloom. Mr. Hall embraces shadow as hungrily as Gordon Willis in the "Godfather" movies, but where the ruddy palette of "The Godfather" suggested a hidden, sensual, blood-spattered twilight, "Road to Perdition" comes in shades of gray fading to black.

Those shades are matched by Thomas Newman's symphonic score, which infuses a sweeping Coplandesque evocation of the American flatlands with Irish folk motifs.

In the flashiest of many visually indelible moments, a cluster of gangsters silhouetted in a heavy rain are systemically mowed down on a Chicago street in a volley of machine-gun

flashes that seem to erupt out of nowhere from an unseen assassin. But no shots or voices are heard. The eerie silence is filled by the solemn swell of Mr. Newman's score. It is one of many scenes of violence in which the camera maintains a discreet aesthetic distance from the carnage. **GEBRUIK HAT**

Although "Road to Perdition" is not without gore, it chooses its bloodier moments with exquisite care **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. The aftermath of another cold-blooded murder is seen only for an instant in the swing of a mirrored bathroom door. Another is shown as a reflection on a window overlooking an idyllic beach on which a boy frisks with a dog. Here the overlapping images evoke more than any words the characters' tragic apprehension of having to choose between two simultaneous, colliding worlds. One is a heaven on earth, the other hell.

INTERPRETATIE

Review 4: 'Road to Perdition'

As "Road to Perdition's" skilled assassin, he does a career about-face, resulting in one of his best performances.

By Kenneth Turan, Times Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times
11-07-02

Half a century ago, James Stewart, at that point the most beloved of American leading men, decided it was time for something completely different.

In a series of bitter, disturbing, early-1950s westerns directed by Anthony Mann--"Winchester '73," "The Naked Spur" and "The Man From Laramie"--Stewart began playing ruthless loners bent on revenge, men capable of rages so terrifying that to experience them is to forget that the sentimental Stewart of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" and "It's a Wonderful Life" ever existed. **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**

Stewart's chilling about-face inevitably comes to mind when watching his modern equivalent, Tom Hanks, identically turn himself inside-out (or is it outside-in?) in director Sam Mendes' **REGISSEUR** brooding, powerful, exquisitely made "Road to Perdition" **GEBRUIK HAT**, playing a Depression-era gangland executioner so skilled and implacable he's known as the Angel of Death. Hanks' Michael Sullivan is a man of few words and less inflection, capable of freezing his rivals with hard looks from impenetrable eyes as well as disconcerting his two young sons with the weight and solemnity of his presence.

It is a lean and deadly performance, one of Hanks' best, and because it is free of mannerisms and has the feeling of coming from an unexpectedly dark and deep place **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**, it makes Sullivan's savage pursuit of a bloody revenge particularly scary and convincing.

It is also unnerving because Hanks remains Hanks, a person we instinctively connect with no matter how bloody his trade **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**.

And so, although his milieu is a violent one, Sullivan's story is finally an emotional and personal one.

It's the story of the unavoidably difficult relationship between fathers and sons, both biological and surrogate, a touchy connection a character sums up by insisting, "It's a natural law: Sons are put on this earth to trouble their fathers."

Mendes, in only his second feature (following the Oscar-winning "American Beauty"), has told this surprisingly resonant story with the potent, unrelenting fatalism of a previously unknown Greek myth.

This is classic albeit somber filmmaking, restrained and all of a piece, by a director who believes film can tell adult stories in an adult manner, who knows the effects he wants and how to get them.

"Road to Perdition" started life as a 1998 graphic novel by Max Allan Collins with art by Richard Piers Rayner. **CONTEXT CBA**

David Self, who previously wrote the focused "Thirteen Days" and the out-of-control "The Haunting," has made some very shrewd changes to the original that increase its emotional wattage **ORIGINALITEIT**. Sullivan has a closer relationship with the crime boss he now considers his surrogate father as well as a more unresolved, unsettled one with his 12-year-old son.

"Road to Perdition" opens with a spare voice-over, spoken by that son as a grown man, that establishes an unwavering tone and sets up the plot: "There are many stories about Michael Sullivan. Some say he was a decent man. Some say there was no good in him at all. But I once spent six weeks with him in the winter of 1931. This is our story."

As is fitting for a violent story, "Perdition" opens with a wake in one of the biggest houses in Rock Island, Ill. It belongs to John Rooney (a faultless Paul Newman), who, at first glance, comes off as a garrulous community leader or maybe the indulgent grandfather to Sullivan's two boys, the older Michael Jr. (Tyler Hoechlin) and the younger Peter (Liam Aiken).

But in truth, Rooney is a major underworld kingpin, a close associate of Al Capone, someone of whom it is truthfully, and fearfully, said, "You rule this town as God rules the Earth. You give and you take away."

Sullivan is more than the top lieutenant who enforces the boss' edicts in blood; he has been like a son to Rooney ever since he was a young orphan taken under the powerful man's wing.

This closeness is beautifully and wordlessly conveyed in a scene at the wake when the two men casually collaborate on a quiet piano duet. **ONTRÖERING - SUBTILITEIT** It's a lovely thing to everyone but Rooney's natural son Connor (British actor Daniel Craig, a long way from "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider **VERGELIJKING FILMS**"), the classic Sonny Corleone-type hothead whose appetite for blood is more apparent than his sanity.

Sullivan's two boys idolize him, although they're not really sure what he does. They hope he's a secret agent, someone who goes on missions like their hero, the Lone Ranger.

One night, Michael Jr. tags along hidden in a car and, in a vision of almost primal intensity, sees his father take part in a savage bloodbath. It's a moment that not only changes their relationship, but that also leads inexorably to the cold-blooded murder of the boy's younger brother and his mother (Jennifer Jason Leigh).

Sullivan is a man built for revenge, but he hadn't counted on having his son with him as he sets out on what is, of course, a drenched-in-violence journey to get it. Sullivan needs to find a way to smoke out his family's killer, to stay one step ahead of Maguire (Jude Law), the

eccentric assassin sent after him and to improve a relationship with his surviving son--whom he'd like to deposit with relatives in a town called Perdicion--that is freighted with all kinds of complications neither feels equipped to handle.

"Road to Perdicion's" excellent cast sees to it that all the ramifications of this story play out as they're supposed to. Newman, who gets nothing but better with age, is riveting as a cold-blooded man of business weighing his legacy against his feelings for a surrogate son. Law brings the right amount of strangeness to a killer whose main drive is to photograph his victims and Stanley Tucci has an effective cameo as Capone cohort Frank Nitti. And Hoechlin, one of more than 2,000 who tried out for the part of young Sullivan, effectively creates a character who gets under his father's skin.

For people who make studio films, opportunities to work on serious projects with sizable budgets are rare. **FILM ALS PRODUCT**, and "Road to Perdicion" has obtained the services of what is, in effect, an all-star team of behind-the-camera personnel, starting with graceful cinematographer Conrad L. Hall.

A two-time Oscar winner (including one for "American Beauty") and a nine-time nominee, Hall has crafted, without seeming to try too hard, a series of beautifully bleak, unforgiving Midwest-in-winter vistas that use the dark colors of nightmare to recall the loneliness of Edward Hopper canvases. **GEbruik HAT**

Re-creating the meticulous sense of 1930s atmosphere that Richard Piers Rayner brought to the graphic novel are production designer Dennis Gassner and costume designer Albert Wolsky, a two-time Oscar winner, for "All That Jazz" and "Bugsy."

The evocative score is by Thomas Newman and giving the film its stately pace is editor Jill Bilcock, who last did Baz Luhrmann's very different "Moulin Rouge."

"Road to Perdicion" has worried a great deal about the details, to the point of having fabric specially woven, aged and dyed so costumes had the proper weight for the period, but that doesn't mean emotion has been neglected. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. Because it is so careful with its effects, this film's ability to create feeling sneaks up and surprises.

This is a story with a will to move us and the ability to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

Review 5:

Road to Perdicion

[Eleanor Ringel Gillespie](#),

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

11-07-02

Review: The sins of the fathers are visited on the sons, and the sins of the sons are visited on the fathers in "Road to Perdicion."

Gleefully shredding his nice-guy image, Tom Hanks plays Michael Sullivan, a taciturn hit man who lives in a small Illinois city during the Depression. His boss, John Rooney (Paul Newman), is a genial Irishman with a fatherly mien and an irresistible boyo manner. He's introduced generously hosting a wake at his own home for one of his men. Nobody could be more upset about the guy's death than Rooney — even though he was the one who ordered him killed.

As for Sullivan, not only does he know, but he doesn't care. Rooney is more than a boss; he's Sullivan's surrogate father, having picked him off the streets when he was a kid. However, their relationship doesn't sit well with the older man's biological son, Connor (Daniel Craig) □cq□, a greedy, hotheaded weakling.

The Sullivan family is doing pretty well, despite the Depression, until one rainy dawn when 12-year-old Michael Jr. (Tyler Hoechlin) □cq□ sneaks into the back seat of his father's car so he can see what Daddy does for a living. When Connor stupidly starts a shootout on a routine job, the boy sees exactly what Daddy does: He kills people.

Sullivan swears the kid will never say a word, and that's good enough for Rooney. Or so he says. But Sullivan quickly realizes that, when Rooney's Irish eyes are smiling, he and Michael better run for it.

So begins an odyssey that offers perdition and redemption. Turned down by Al Capone's right-hand man, Frank Nitti (a dapper Stanley Tucci), when he seeks his help, Sullivan and son are on their own as they head for the little town of Perdition (yeah, I know), where the boy's aunt lives. What they don't know is that Nitti, at Rooney's request, has contacted a creepy crime-scene photographer named Maguire (Jude Law), who moonlights as a hit man. (Sometimes he's snapping away at his own victims.)

"Road to Perdition" is directed by Sam Mendes **REGISSEUR** ("American Beauty") and based on a graphic novel by Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner **CONTEXT CBA**. It is, in many ways, a mournful movie. One "father" who must kill a "son" while another desperately tries to save a son — not just from Rooney and his goons, but from the damnation of following in his father's blighted footsteps.

Mendes tells his story carefully, alternating a thoughtful, muted scene with a bravura blast of violence **COMPLEXITEIT**. There's something not quite real about the film — a tale told, if you will. And indeed it is. In the very first scene, a boy (Michael, it turns out), standing on a beach, tells us that some people thought his dad was a decent person and others said that there was no good in him at all. "But I once spent six weeks with him in the winter of 1931," he says. "This is our story."

Their story is also told by cinematographer Conrad Hall's exquisite compositions, which are often as richly evocative as anything in "The Godfather." **SUBTILITEIT – VERGELIJKING FILMS** Scene after scene plays like a product reel of the Greatest Movie Moments of 2002. Michael is first seen pedaling his bike through a mass of faceless workers, trudging through a delapidated industrial city like something out of "Ironweed." Men in heavy, bulky 1930s overcoats step out of one of those wonderful "The Untouchables" cars into a driving rain, on their way to kill someone **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. In Chicago, row upon row of the unemployed sit with their newspapers open to the want ads. One of the best scenes, in which Sullivan realizes, mid-meal, that the man in the next booth (Maguire) is a killer, just like him, takes place in a diner out of Edward Hopper.

Hanks and Newman may not have been gunning for Oscar nominations, but they both are likely to end up on the short list. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Hanks isn't evil incarnate; he gives Sullivan a gravitas that suggests someone who makes a living doing bad things. Every gesture is deliberate and defined. On the run, he's focused and alert, even as he regretfully teaches young Michael the tricks of the trade.

Newman is Newman, and there's not enough of him. He gives this somber movie whatever fizz it has. He knows exactly who Rooney is, with his deadly ebullience and his guilty, blood-is-thicker-than-loyalty to an unworthy son.

As he did in last year's "A.I.," Law obliterates his leading-man looks. His Maguire has a shambling duckwalk gait, dirty, uneven teeth and wispy, unhappy hair. He's like something that crawled out from under a rock . . . heavily armed.

It's rare to wish that a movie could've been longer, but "Road to Perdition," despite its slow pace, should've taken a little more time **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. To feel the film's intended emotional force, we need another couple of scenes with Rooney and Sullivan or with Rooney and his son or, for that matter, with Sullivan and his son before they became fugitives. The missing parts aren't fatal, but they're there.

"Road to Perdition," a few stumbles aside, is all there. **The lighting, the score, the costumes, everything.** **SUBTILITEIT** You can almost see Mendes and company getting together before a single frame had been shot and collectively vowing, "This is going to be something really good." And it is.

5 Offline reviews: American Splendor

Review 1:

Homage to an ordinary, extraordinary life: 'American Splendor' finds the mundane magic in being just an average Harvey

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic

San Francisco Chronicle

Friday, August 22, 2003

American Splendor: Comedy-drama. Starring Paul Giamatti, Hope Davis, Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner. Directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. (R. 101 minutes. At Bay Area theaters. -----If comic book writer Harvey Pekar's life is worth a movie, anybody's life is worth a movie. Yet that's precisely what makes "American Splendor," a dramatized recounting of Pekar's life, a special and worthwhile film. It's a humane and witty treatment of an average life that, incidentally, speaks to the worth and inherent drama of average lives.

In a sense, the movie does what Pekar has devoted himself to doing. For decades, he wrote autobiographical comics (illustrated by others), with no superhero flourishes, about his routine existence as a clerk in a Cleveland Veteran's Administration hospital. Writing first-person comics for a cult audience is one thing **CONTEXT CBA**. It's on a whole other order of difficulty to fashion that material into a sustained third-person narrative that will hold the interest of a movie audience.

To accomplish this, writer-directors Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini **REGISSEUR** adopt a unique storytelling strategy that **ORIGINALITEIT**, at first, seems casual, almost sloppy: Paul Giamatti plays Pekar and Hope Davis plays Joyce Brabner, Pekar's wife of more than 20 years, but mixed in with their scenes, the real Pekar and Brabner also appear, in interview segments, commenting on the action.

This could easily have become precious, but Berman and Pulcini sprinkle in the interview bits with taste.

By the middle of the film, the strategy has paid off handsomely, when the film is able to cut from Giamatti, as Pekar, waiting to go onstage to do the Letterman show, to actual footage of Pekar with Letterman. **SUBTILITEIT** For one stretch, Davis (as Brabner) watches the real Pekar on a TV monitor, without noticing that her husband has changed bodies. It's a clever slight of hand, an example of movie magic. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

Pekar is an intelligent man who, for some reason, could never quite engage with life on its own terms. Either out of fear, fear of success, depression, a limited sense of self or some contrary spirit of integrity, Pekar dropped out of college (he dreaded having to take a required non-humanities course) and chose to live a borderline, poverty-stricken existence. At one point, there's mention of his using glue to mend a winter coat, so he can get another year's wear out of it.

A mutual interest in jazz and comic books becomes the basis for his friendship with future comics great Robert Crumb, played by James Urbaniak with low-key comic assurance. It's Crumb's subsequent success that makes Pekar realize that the comic book idiom is not limited to superheroes. He starts writing his own comics, based on his life, using stick figures in place of drawings, and eventually shows his work to his old friend.

"This is really . . . good," Crumb says, and then adds -- in the words that will change Pekar's life -- "Can I take this home? I'd like to illustrate it." **CONTEXT CBA**

But "American Splendor" is not the usual American success story. Pekar's comic books give him a focus, but he never gets to quit his day job. **If the movie is about anything, it's not success but loneliness.** **INTERPRETATIE** Until the arrival of Brabner, Pekar is presented as a man in unmarried hell, dressed in old clothes and walking through a supermarket, looking at women he won't talk to and throwing cans of cooked spaghetti into a shopping cart. In one scene, he runs into a woman he knew in college, and the casual meeting lingers in his mind, for no reason but that he has nothing else in his life.

That sense of paralyzing and almost maddening loneliness is what we take from "American Splendor" -- that and the relief that comes when Brabner enters the picture. Their first date, from a distance, looks dreadful. They're both uncomfortable in the restaurant. They go back to his apartment, and it's a mess. Their first kisses are interrupted when she gets a violent stomach flu. But then out of nowhere, Giamatti as Pekar says, simply and with no awareness of any profundity, "It sure is nice to have company." It sure is.

Giamatti and Davis are quite sweet together **ONTROERING** -- and vulnerable and loving and carping and bickering: They're married. Some will see "American Splendor" as the story of a career, but career stories are common. This is rare -- a tale of a marriage. As the movie shows, American life is competitive, harsh and often lonely, but when two people really find each other, that's the real splendor.-- Advisory: This film contains strong language.

Review 2:

'Splendor': Comic Book Life That's Not So Funny
By Stephen Hunter

Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, August 22, 2003

Let us examine that most frightening of Western species, the *Schlumpfus americanus*, or American schlumpf.

He has the posture of a question mark, the surly, sullen face of a lout. He snarls. His skin seems not to fit his bones well, and he's always twitching or twisting as if to escape it. He can never think of anything to say that isn't a whine, a rant or a crack. He's a cockeyed pessimist. His teeth are raggedy, but that's okay, because his clothes are cheap. He's losing his hair, but it was never attractive to begin with -- although without his hair, he's even more unattractive. He hates his job, his friends, his life, and his anger has turned his face gray. When he speaks, bitter flecks of saliva fly out to drive away the world. He's annoying. He's grim.

Here's the scary part: He's you. He's me.

But mainly, he's Harvey Pekar, a dismal little man from Cleveland who represents the spirit of reality unvarnished by romance, of hope carved small and bleak, of eternal anger and furious resentment. **INTERPRETATIE** His problem is that he was born entitled, though to what, he's not sure. He just knew he was going to get a lot of cool stuff, and the fact that it never arrived shows how screwed up the world is.

There are millions of him, nameless and rancid, but we know Harvey's name because he concentrated all his fury into writing the script of a comic book -- he was not an artist, understand, but a writer -- **CONTEXT CBA** which he then sent off to his old Cleveland buddy

Bob Crumb (as in *the R. Crumb*). Crumb, his own kind of genius, recognized a genuine talent for the concentrated expressiveness that is the art of comic-book writing, and as a consequence the yearly comic book "American Splendor" was born, written by Pekar, drawn by R. and many others. A modest hit, it spawned cult fame and subsidiary projects, the latest of which is this film. So "American Splendor" the movie turns out to be a hybrid doc drama, the upshot, years later, of Pekar's life in the flesh and in the little boxes of the comic book.

It's a document full of strangenesses, unlike any before or after. **That it's unique seems pretty much to fit and express Pekar perfectly ORIGINALITEIT**, because he is the most unique Everyman ever coughed up by our twisted society. He is so like us, so of us, so deeply and powerfully us, he is instantly recognizable; but the power of his talent sets him apart. How many of us, after all, star in our own comic books, go on Letterman, sit through book signings? But you can't say he's been spoiled. He was a jerk before the comic book and now, after the books, he's become . . . well, nothing. He's not rich, he's not really famous, he's, er, still a jerk. I like that in a man.

The movie, directed (brilliantly) by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini REGISSEUR – GEBRUIK HAT, offers Pekar in three forms. In the first form, it's just Pekar himself, answering questions that Berman puts before him, usually without much grace or animation, without wit or style, just the usual Pekar stuff, which is a snide, barely civil response. In Form 2 -- the majority of the movie -- Pekar's life is dramatized, with actors playing Pekar; his wife, Joyce; his friends at the Cleveland Veterans Hospital (where the real Pekar was a file clerk). The third form combines the first two: Actor Paul Giamatti, who plays Harvey (but doesn't have his angry gauntness) interacts with the real Pekar on the set of Form 2.

Sometimes it becomes even more aggressively postmodern **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**. For example, recounting Pekar's long and twisted relationship with David Letterman in the 1980s, Giamatti is shown in the green room backstage, waiting to go on with Dave. When he's called to the set, he steps out of the frame, and archival footage displays the real Pekar's segment on the talk show; then he steps off-screen, and Pekar is Giamatti again, discussing what he just said to Letterman. **COMPLEXITEIT**

It sounds more complex than it is: Once you accept the identities of the cast and fix them to their real-life counterparts, the whole thing spins along effortlessly, the study of an unpleasant man trying to get through his unpleasant life, beset by unpleasant problems: lack of money and respect, lack of hope, strife with mate and pals, the passage of time, the absence of love, the acceptance of reality and, finally, the appearance of cancer. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

That last segment, based on the illustrated novel that Pekar and Joyce wrote, recounts his year with a crab nibbling at his innards, and the chemical heat that burned it out. Nice it's not, but then cancer isn't nice. Pekar hates the addition of anguish to despair and pain to indolence. He hates Joyce (played deadpan by the great Hope Davis) for being upbeat and trying to find a way to help him cope. He hates himself for his stupidity in getting cancer. He just hates and hates and gradually struggles toward recovery.

The genius of the film is its utter commitment to the Pekar point of view GEBRUIK HAT. As Pekar's own style mandates, it sugarcoats nothing; everything it portrays has the harsh banality of life as it is lived in the midwinter of Cleveland's climate and light, and people as they behave, which is often poorly. **It also expresses endless contempt for media and entertainment forms that turn these experiences into synthetics of inappropriate but appealing imagination INTERPRETATIE**.

Will you like the movie? I didn't VOORSPELLING REACTIE. It's every bit as crabby and grumpy as Pekar. But in its ugly way, it shows the purest and most transcendental form of beauty, which is just life adapting and continuing. It's a hymn to human endurance, and you don't need to climb a mountain or trek to a pole to see it. You just have to hang out in Cleveland.

Review 3:
American Splendor
[Roger Ebert](#)
[Chicago Sun-Times](#)
08/22/03

One of the closing shots of "[American Splendor](#)" shows a retirement party for Harvey Pekar, who is ending his career as a file clerk at a V.A. hospital in Cleveland. This is a real party, and it is a real retirement. Harvey Pekar, the star of comic books, the Letterman show and now this movie, worked all of his life as a file clerk. CONTEXT CBA. When I met Harvey and his wife, Joyce Brabner, at Cannes 2003, she told me: "He's grade G-4. Grade G-2 is minimum wage. Isn't that something, after 30 years as a file clerk?" Yes, but it got them to Cannes. Pekar is one of the heroes of graphic novels, which are comic books with a yearning toward the light. He had the good fortune to meet the legendary comic artist R. Crumb in the 1970s. He observed with his usual sour pessimism that comics were never written about people like him, and as he talked, a light bulb all but appeared above Crumb's head, and the comic book American Splendor was born, with Pekar as writer and Crumb as illustrator.

The books chronicle the life of a man very much indeed like Harvey Pekar. He works at a thankless job. He has friends at work, like the "world-class nerd" Toby Radloff, who share his complaints, although not at the Pekarian level of existential misery. GEBRUIK HAT. The comic book brings him a visit from a fan named Joyce Brabner, who turns out improbably to be able to comprehend his existence while insisting on her own, and eventually they gain a daughter, Danielle Batone, sort of through osmosis (the daughter of a friend, she comes to visit, and decides to stay). The books follow Harvey, Joyce and Danielle as they sail through life, not omitting Our Cancer Year, a book retelling his travails after Harvey finds a lump on a testicle.

The comics are true, deep. COMPLEXITEIT and funny. HUMOR/GRAPPIGHEID precisely because they see that we are all superheroes doing daily battle against twisted and perverted villains. We have secret powers others do not suspect. We have secret identities. Our enemies may not be as colorful as the Joker or Dr. Evil, but certainly they are malevolent--who could be more hateful, for example, than an anal-retentive supervisor, an incompetent medical orderly, a greedy landlord? When Harvey fills with rage, only the graphics set him aside from the Hulk.

The peculiarity and genius of American Splendor was always that true life and fiction marched hand in hand. GEBRUIK HAT. There was a real Harvey Pekar, who looked very much like the one in the comic book, and whose own life was being described. Now comes this magnificently audacious movie, in which fact and fiction sometimes coexist in the same frame. We see and hear the real Harvey Pekar, and then his story is played by the actor [Paul Giamatti](#), sometimes with Harvey commenting on "this guy who is playing me." We see the real Joyce Brabner, and we see [Hope Davis](#) playing her. We concede that Giamatti and Davis have mastered not only the looks but the feels and even the souls of these two people, and then there is Judah Friedlander to play Toby Radloff, who we might think could not be played by anybody, but there the two Tobys are, and we can see it's a match. FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT

The movie deals not merely with real and fictional characters, but even with levels of presentation. There are documentary scenes, fictional scenes, and then scenes illustrated and developed as comic books. SUBTILITEIT with the drawings sometimes segueing into reality or back again. The filmmakers have taken the challenge of filming a comic book based on a life, and turned it into an advantage--the movie is mesmerizing in the way it lures us into the daily hopes and fears of this Cleveland family. ENTERTAINMENT

The personality of the real Harvey Pekar is central to the success of everything. Not any file

clerk would have done. Pekar's genius is to see his life from the outside, as a life like all lives, in which eventual tragedy is given a daily reprieve. He is brutally honest. The conversations he has with Joyce are conversations like those we really have. We don't fight over trivial things, because nothing worth fighting over is trivial. As Harvey might say, Hey, it's important to me! The Letterman sequences have the fascination of an approaching train wreck. Pekar really was a regular on the program in the 1980s, where he did not change in the slightest degree from the real Harvey. He gave as good as he got, until his resentments, angers and grudges led him to question the fundamental realities of the show itself, and then he was bounced. We see real Letterman footage, and then a fictional re-creation of Pekar's final show. Letterman is not a bad guy, but he has a show to do, and Pekar is a good guest following his own agenda up to a point, but then he goes far, far beyond that point. When I talked with Pekar at Cannes, he confided that after Letterman essentially fired him and went to a commercial break, Dave leaned over and whispered into Harvey's ear: "You blew a good thing." Well, he did. But blowing a good thing is Harvey's fate in life, just as stumbling upon a good thing is his victory. What we get in both cases is the unmistakable sense that Pekar does nothing for effect, that all of his decisions and responses proceed from some limitless well of absolute certitude. What we also discover is that Harvey is not entirely a dyspeptic grump, but has sweetness and hope waving desperately from somewhere deep within his despair.

This film is delightful in the way it finds its own way to tell its own story **ENTERTAINMENT**. There was no model to draw on, but [Shari Springer Berman](#) and [Robert Pulcini](#), who wrote and directed it, **REGISSEUR** have made a great film by trusting to Pekar's artistic credo **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**, which amounts to: What you see is what you get. The casting of Giamatti and Davis is perfect, but of course it had to be, or the whole enterprise would have collapsed. Giamatti is not a million miles away from other characters he has played, in movies such as "Storytelling," "Private Parts" and "Man on the Moon," **VERGELIJKING FILMS** but Davis achieves an uncanny transformation. I saw her again recently in "[The Secret Lives of Dentists](#)," playing a dentist, wife and mother with no points in common with Joyce Brabner--not in look, not in style, not in identity. Now here she is as Joyce. I've met Joyce Brabner, and she's Joyce Brabner.

Movies like this seem to come out of nowhere, like free-standing miracles. But "[American Splendor](#)" does have a source, and its source is Harvey Pekar himself--his life, and what he has made of it. The guy is the real thing. He found Joyce, who is also the real thing, and Danielle found them, and as I talked with her I could see she was the real thing, too. She wants to go into showbiz, she told me, but she doesn't want to be an actress, because then she might be unemployable after 40. She said she wants to work behind the scenes. More longevity that way. Harvey nodded approvingly. Go for the pension.

Review 4:

'American Splendor' finds surprising poignance in the life of a comic book writer

By Ty Burr,
Boston Globe Staff
08/22/2003

For an art movement that never cracked the mainstream and whose finest practitioners barely paid the rent **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**, the underground comics of the 1960s and '70s have had a splattery and lasting pop-culture impact **CONNECTIE POP CULTUUR**. Seminal figure Robert Crumb was the focus of the celebrated 1994 documentary "Crumb," whose director, Terry Zwigoff, went on to turn Dan Clowes's graphic novel "Ghost World" into a biting 2000 satire. Art Spiegelman found fame with "Maus" and New Yorker covers; Bill Griffith's "Zippy the Pinhead" drops daily zen-bombs in the funny pages.

Now it's Harvey Pekar's turn, and, believe me, he's probably griping about how long it took. The longtime

Cleveland file clerk, poet of the mundane, genius crank behind the "American Splendor" comic book, and David Letterman's holy fool finally has a film dedicated to his dyspeptic battles with the quotidian -- and it's a beauty: wise, many-layered **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT - COMPLEXITEIT**, and funny as hell **HUMOR**. The great joke about Pekar's work is that he can't draw to save his life, so he gets other illustrators -- notably his old friend Bob Crumb -- to ink the autobiographical rants and whimsies that fill the pages of "American Splendor." The movie, written and directed by married Pekar fans Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini **REGISSEUR**, is an adaptation of a number of stories from the comic. Thus it's the story of one mensch's **CONTEXT CBA**

life: Pekar's passion for old jazz 78s, the breakup of his first marriage and wooing of Joyce Brabner, his mid-'80s appearances on "Letterman" (which culminated in Pekar getting booted off the show for airing NBC owner GE's dirty laundry), his recent bout with lymphoma, and -- always -- his dead-end life at the Cleveland VA Hospital and the eccentric co-workers whom he immortalized in the pages of "Splendor." Why would you pay to see this in a theater when you get it for free every day? Well, that's Harvey's point: Both the comics and the movie embrace the normal at the same time they celebrate an intellectual misfit's distance from it **COMPLEXITEIT**. In a neat Pirandellian twist, Pekar is played by actor Paul Giamatti -- who nails every slouch and squawk **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** -- and by the 60-something Harvey himself, commenting with raspy bemusement on the whole movie-vs-reality thing. Joyce, bristling with smart-girl doubts, is played by actress Hope Davis with the real Brabner offering footnotes; similarly, Judah Friedlander acts the part of Pekar pal and earnest super-nerd Toby Radloff until the genuine article puts in an appearance.

The effect of this double vision (augmented by flights of fancy in which Pekar's cartoon visions come hilariously to life) is to make the case for a well-observed life that finds beauty and humor in the banal. **INTERPRETATIE** "American Splendor" is a ragged scrapbook of a narrative that shuttles between the filmed and the drawn, the actual and the imagined, dramatic recreations of the Letterman appearances and video footage of the real thing. It sketches Pekar's collisions with our culture with the wit of Crumb (who's played with droll venom by James Urbaniak) but ultimately without his bitterness. Harvey's too busy living life to mock it.

The movie is priceless comic -- the Harvey/Joyce scenes catalog the couple's neuroses with glee -- but it just as often reaches for something richer. One section recreates the classic, ghostly "American Splendor" monologue in which Pekar (drawn by Crumb) talks about discovering two other men with his name in the Cleveland phone book, and if the filmed version doesn't capture the metaphysical vaudeville of the strip, it shares its unsettling undertow **GEBRUIK HAT**.

Toward the end, "Splendor" gets a bit sentimental, as Harvey and Joyce weather cancer and become guardians to a young girl (Madylin Sweetin). The film offers closure, which films tend to do and which Pekar's comics avoid, and perhaps that's why an article in the current "Film Comment" has blasted the movie for neutering this career iconoclast into the equivalent of a cute indie-flick bobblehead doll. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

I'm not buying it. Pekar still comes off plenty abrasive for moviegoers coming to him cold, but he seems to have made peace with the mainstream culture he loathes and is fascinated by. The real sell-outs are in the past -- such as when MTV exploited Toby's freak-show appeal in a mid-1980s series of spots -- and a tough, peaceful air of summing up pervades the final scenes. Harvey won his battle. Through art, he made an invisible life visible. **CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST**

Review 5:

FILM REVIEW; A Comics Guy, Outside the Box

By ELVIS MITCHELL

Published: August 15, 2003

New York Times

'From off the streets of Cleveland comes 'American Splendor' " screams the cover of every issue of the writer Harvey Pekar's surly and open-eyed autobiographical comic-book series. The towering, action-packed logo is a further sardonic comment on the lack of activity in the protagonist's life. **CONTEXT CBA**

And there's as much at stake in the hilarious **HUMOR**, moody and cantankerous film adaptation of "Splendor" as there was in this summer's other movies of comic-book antiheroes like "The Hulk" and "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen."

Harvey is extraordinary -- by the way, so's the movie **GEBRUIK HAT**, written and directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini **REGISSEUR** -- but he's no gentleman. He actually has a lot more in common with the earliest incarnation of the Hulk as created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.

That Hulk was a ferocious, gray glob of fury that spent most of his time in a Southwestern cave spouting angrily to his powerless sidekick about a world that refused to understand him. As played by Paul Giamatti, Harvey is a gray wad of anger that spends his time in his cavelike apartment, with shelves sagging under the weight of his collection of record albums and jazz 78's **VERGELIJKING FILMS**, sputtering to his equally powerless pals about a world that he refuses to understand. Slumped into a posture that's a question mark with a pot belly, Mr. Giamatti is a frustrated tremor, shaking and gesticulating futilely.

His performance gets some of the real Pekar notes just right, including the constant peppering of sentences with "man," like a 50's beat hipster **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. The writer-directors enliven their picture with devices that supplant the stream-of-consciousness narration that came in the comics. They surround the screen with comic-book frames and boxed text, like the "1950: Our story begins" rectangle that hangs like a stalactite from the corner of the screen.

The comic-book visuals also provide the contrast Ms. Berman and Mr. Pulcini use to explain exactly what separates Mr. Pekar's comics from regular super-hero stuff **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. The filmmakers use the real Mr. Pekar as a narrator initially. ("He's the guy playing me," he says in his soft croak. "But he don't look nothin' like me, but whatever.")

For a time the film cuts to the real-life Mr. Pekar, fulminating on screen with his friends against a stark white background that suggests the sheets of Bristol board that comics artists use to draw their characters. This sounds like a mocking, distancing device, and in the wrong hands it would be. But Mr. Pekar is as vivid in his way as Mr. Giamatti.

The actual Mr. Pekar is a flinty crank who spouts, while the actors portraying figures from the streets of Cleveland chuckle in disbelief at him and his obsessive, nerdy friends. (The great cast includes Judah Friedlander, who plays Harvey's friend Toby with breathtaking precision; Earl Billings as Mr. Boats, one of Harvey's bellicose, small-minded and larger-than-life co-workers at the Veterans Administration; and Danny Hoch.)

The movie reminds us of the subgenre of out-of-the-mainstream comics films when it introduces Harvey and Robert Crumb (James Urbaniak) to each other. Mr. Crumb went on to illustrate many of the earliest issues of "American Splendor." (Mr. Crumb's drawings are employed on screen, as is the art of several other "Splendor" mainstays, including Gary Dunn and Mark Zingarelli.)

"They made a movie about him, too," the narration says, though Terry Zwigoff's documentary "Crumb" isn't mentioned specifically. Mr. Zwigoff's film of Dan Clowes's "Ghost World" is also part of the realm influenced by Mr. Pekar and Mr. Crumb, and it's a droll highlight when these men meet. Crumb ambles up to Harvey, who switches his Jay McShann record from one arm to another to keep it away from Crumb; he's hoarding in plain sight.

As enjoyable as the picture is, you can almost hear the hard-core aficionados of the comics series shifting in their seats VOORSPELLING REACTIE, rubbing the backs of their necks as Mr. Pekar does and muttering "sellout." It's true that this isn't the vital, tough-minded Harvey Pekar of the comics, a callus-knuckled autodidact who never played the sap and really was a hipster remnant of the Beat era.

He refused to be beaten down by the melancholy that defined his existence, and this is most accurately reflected in the movie when Harvey meets his romantic match, Joyce Brabner, played with a tart, intriguing directness by Hope Davis that's equal parts Emma Goldman and Olive Oyl -- that is, the Olive Oyl of the comics, not the screaming helpless No. 2 pencil of the cartoons. COMPLEXITEIT

Wonderfully, "Splendor," the movie and the comic-book, both take off into the stratosphere when they evoke the teeming, dirty and affectionate rundown life of Elzie Segar's "Popeye" comic strips, with their brisk American existentialism GEBRUIK HAT. The earliest sections of the movie play as though they have buffed the sharp edges off Harvey. But the filmmakers are trying to set a tone. And even as the Harvey of the opening sections is a likable sad-sack loser, the visual scheme that the filmmakers and their team -- including the production designer Thérèse DePrez and the cinematographer Terry Stacey -- put together shows the oppressive ordinariness that Mr. Pekar had to mine for his stories. SUBTILITEIT

The movie takes place under the sunless skies of Cleveland, a land where bright daylight disappears from about early fall to late spring. The production design achieves the drab pallor through use of dusty brick reds, autumnal browns and oranges and dirty ballpark-mustard yellows: it's a Rust Belt palette.

Film really can't evince the working-class subversion of Mr. Pekar's "Splendor" comics, but the movie brings its own take on Harvey's life to the screen. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF It neither embarrasses nor condescends. And the picture, which opens today in New York, Los Angeles and Cleveland, becomes something richer and fuller when Joyce appears. Harvey has someone to square off with, and her eccentricities complement his. They fight the cramped ceilings of low expectations, and the movie gathers narrative momentum by dramatizing Harvey's battle with cancer, the episode told in "Our Cancer Year," the graphic novel they wrote together.

The movie ties the onset of Harvey's cancer to his calamitous guest spot on the old "Late Night With David Letterman" show, using it as a way to explain his fight with the show's host,

an incident that denies Harvey's rigidly worked-out politics and also his understanding that he was playing an exaggerated version of himself for Mr. Letterman.

Though the picture has to condense Mr. Pekar's stories, it also depicts an aspect of him as important as his funky irritability. He may not be a genius, but he does have the soul of an artist. The movie uses wonderful pieces of music, from Jay McShann, of course, to the Pretenders -- featuring Ohio's own Chrissie Hynde -- and their "My City Was Gone" for a moment of happy intimacy as Harvey and Joyce dance around the house.

Most important, we hear "Ain't That Peculiar" twice. The Chocolate Genius cover and Marvin Gaye's vital, jazz-and-gospel-inflected original -- his driving high spirit singing the contradictory "I don't understand it, baby, it's so strange, sometimes" -- is the perfect encapsulation of "American Splendor."

"American Splendor" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It has expressive and salty strong language and subject matter.

5 Offline reviews: Bulletproof Monk

Review 1:

Chow's 'Bulletproof Monk' has few comedic holes

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
San Francisco Chronicle
Wednesday, April 16, 2003

"Bulletproof Monk" has more going for it than a promising title. It has a life and style that other buddy action movies lack -- plus moldy subterranean locations straight out of a video or cartoon fantasy. **SUBTILITEIT** It also has a first-time director, Paul Hunter **REGISSEUR**, who didn't approach the material cynically but actually tried to make a good picture -- and succeeded.

Most importantly, "Bulletproof Monk" has Chow Yun-Fat as the title character, a Tibetan monk who was entrusted 60 years ago to protect an ancient scroll. **The scroll is a little like Tolkien's ring in that it can grant unlimited power and guarantees eternal youth to whoever possesses it** **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. As the Monk With No Name, Chow gives the movie an appealing center. He's more robust than the average monk, and he has a nice face to look at for almost two hours.

What makes Chow's face nice is the vast quantity of private amusement he brings to his performance. His inner twinkle, a familiar aspect of his charm as an actor, is put to good use here, suggesting that, despite all the goons shooting at him throughout the movie, the job of a semi-eternal bulletproof monk is an all-right gig. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

The monk is especially amused by a young pickpocket who robs him. He takes in young Kar (Seann William Scott) **with a Buddha-like interior hilarity** **HUMOR**, recognizing him for a thief and a scoundrel but also seeing spunk, and monks like spunk. The monk starts going everywhere Kar goes, sizing him up, talking to him, measuring him as a possible successor. He does this in between fighting off waves of attackers, as an ancient Nazi (Karel Roden) and his sexy granddaughter (Victoria Smurfit) keep sending assault squads to steal the scroll.

"Bulletproof Monk" is on solid ground early on, when the monk turns up inside Kar's apartment and Kar tries to throw him out. Without dropping a bowl of cereal, the monk is able to duck Kar's blows, falling all the way back on his heels and then rocking back to an upright position, like a child's punching bag. It's a tasteful use of computer graphics -- to enhance a moment rather than be a moment's entire reason for being.

Kar is the biggest role yet for Scott ("American Pie"), and he responds with a commitment and wholehearted earnestness that's uncommon in the action genre. Put simply, **Scott treats this role as if somebody just handed him Hamlet. Nothing is phoned in or sloughed off. He is present in every moment, as alert as a small animal and equally bright-eyed and cute in a scruffy sort of way** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. He's the terrier to Chow's Great Dane, and the two make a good team. Jaime King (formerly known as James King) rounds out the crew, in control as a kind of damaged ice princess.

"Bulletproof Monk" is based on a three-comic series published in the late '90s. Perhaps because there was only three of them, the movie doesn't feel overburdened by story **CONTEXT CBA**. It also wasn't tremendously famous, so it's not fettered by the necessity of pleasing millions of fans. **But the comic inspiration helps in the movie's look and feel, with much of the action set in dark warehouses, murky subways and cavelike hideaways.** **SUBTILITEIT**

Hunter has a background in music video, and he lets that be his glory, not his ruin. He doesn't film "Bulletproof Monk" as a succession of four-minute movies, and he doesn't try to jazz up scenes with excessive cutting. Rather, he shows an eye for bringing together images in a way that a music video brings together music and pictures.

A noteworthy example is the shot in which we see Kar, in the Asian movie theater where he works, watching a martial arts picture and doubling the fight moves he sees onscreen. We see a screen in the background, and a man in the foreground, in a moment that's not necessary to the story but dreamlike, lyric and cool, a pleasant little extra. -- Advisory: This movie contains graphic violence, including scenes of torture.

Review 2:

Bulletproof Monk

BY ROGER EBERT / April 16, 2003
Chicago Sun-Times

Let us first consider the Scroll of the Ultimate. "Whoever reads it aloud in its entirety," an ancient monk explains to his young acolyte, "will gain the power to control the world." It is Tibet in 1943. The Nazis are there to capture the Scroll of the Ultimate. We recall from "Raiders of the Lost Ark" that the Third Reich was also trying to capture the Ark of the Covenant, perhaps so that [Leni Riefenstahl](#), Hitler's favorite filmmaker, could direct "The Scroll of the Ultimate vs. the Ark of the Covenant," a title I have just registered with the Writers' Guild.

VERGERLIJKING FILMS

The young acolyte accepts responsibility for the Scroll, and renounces his name, becoming The Monk With No Name, a name [Clint Eastwood](#) should have registered with the Writers' Guild. No sooner does the Monk ([Chow Yun-Fat](#)) take possession than the sky churns with sensational visual effects, high winds blow, and the Nazis attack the temple **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**. The Monk escapes by jumping off a high cliff, after first taking a Nazi bullet that hits him right in the Scroll. He survives the jump, as he later explains, because gravity exists only if you think it does.

Because he walks around on the ground a lot, apparently he thinks it does, most of the time.

SUBTILITEIT The knack is to learn how to turn your belief on and off. Sixty years later, which is how long any one monk can guard the Scroll, the Monk is in New York City when he happens upon a pickpocket named Kar ([Seann William Scott](#)). Kar is working the subway, and has indeed just picked the Scroll from the Monk's briefcase, when he is forced into the subterranean lair of a gang of young toughs who look as dangerous as the crowd in a leather bar on date night. This gang is led by Mr. Funktastic (Patrick Haggarty), who has his name tattooed across his chest, and also includes the beautiful Bad Girl (Jaime King), who turns out to be a good girl. Kar engages in a violent martial arts struggle with the gang for a long time, after which they stop, because the scene is over, and Mr. Funktastic issues a dire warning should Kar ever stray their way again.

Like he wants to hang out down there in the subterranean lair.

The Monk With No Name has secretly observed the fight, perhaps because Mr. Funktastic's men failed to notice the arrival of an unexpected monk, and he becomes friends with Kar, who seems to fit the Three Prophecies made about the one who will be chosen to guard the Scroll for the next 60 years. Of course Kar is a reckless youth and must learn much about life; meanwhile the Nazis turn up again and at one point have the Monk With No Name strapped to a torture machine, crucifix-style, and are about to screw things into his brain.

"[Bulletproof Monk](#)" is a cross between a traditional Hong Kong martial arts movie and various American genres, incorporating the dubious notion that the wisest and most skilled practitioners of the ancient Asian arts have nothing better to do than tutor young Americans **SUBTILITEIT**. To be sure, Kar has been studying on his own. "Where do you study fighting?" the Monk asks him. "The Golden Palace," he says. This is the broken-down movie palace where he is the projectionist, and copies the moves from old karate movies.

The fight scenes in "[Bulletproof Monk](#)" are not as inventive as some I've seen (although the opening fight on a rope bridge is so well done that it raises expectations it cannot fulfill). **POSITIEF/NGEATIEF** The film demonstrates, "Matrix"-style, that a well-trained fighter **VERGELIJKING FILMS** can leap into the air and levitate while spinning dozens of times, although why anyone would want to do this is never explained. Yun-Fat and Scott do as much with the material as they can, although it's always a little awkward trying to shoehorn a romance into a movie like this, especially when you have to clear time for Bad Girl and Nina ([Victoria Smurfit](#)), who is a third-generation Nazi and the real bad girl, to have their obligatory hand-to-hand combat.

"[Bulletproof Monk](#)" was written by Ethan Reiff and Cyrus Voris, based on the comic book by Brett Lewis and RA Jones, and will appeal to more or less the same audience as the comic book. The ads and trailer hope we confuse it with "[Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon](#)," but this is more like the Young Readers version.

Review 3:

Kung Fu Hooley: Chow Yun-Fat's Mixed-Up 'Monk'

By Stephen Hunter

Washington Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, April 16, 2003

"Bulletproof Monk" produces strong reactions.

One might be "Oh, my."

Or how about "Hmm." Then there's always "My goodness."

Finally, the circumstances cry out for a heartfelt "Well, wasn't that something."

On a positive note, one might note the return of the great Asian star Chow Yun-Fat to the aegis of his discoverer, developer and mentor, John Woo, who helped produce this film. On a negative note, one might note that the great Woo didn't direct it; **that task fell to Paul Hunter** **REGISSEUR** -- or should I say, that task fell on Paul Hunter.

This is another example -- the recent, unlamented "Dreamcatcher" being the most glaring -- of a movie chockablock with too many elements. What's it about? What's it not about? **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

It's about an ageless Tibetan monk protecting an ancient scroll from Nazis. It's about a young punk who talks out of the side of his mouth learning a craft and making a career choice. It's about a wicked blond gal who can fu some kung. It's about a director who clearly saw "A Clockwork Orange" at an impressionable age. **It's about torture chambers, plots to control the world, kung fu movies, and so forth and so on. It's about one from Column A, one from Column B, one from Column 11, one from Column Thirteenty-ninety, one from Venus and one from the Core.** **COMPLEXITEIT**

Chow gets to be charming, presumably his enticement for joining this rickety crusade. He reached world stardom as a stoic gun-toter, but in the American phase of his career he has tried to exile the nihilism in exchange for an actual personality. In this one, he's more like a combination of Jiminy Cricket and Miyagi, of "The Karate Kid," than he is like the hitman in "The Replacement Killers" VERGELIJKING FILMS."

He gets to crinkle his eyes and make jokes and extend a hand to youth. The plot has him as a Tibetan monk whose sacred task is to guard that scroll thing, possession of which somehow yields world domination. The physics are a little hazy SUBTILITEIT.

But now, 60 years into his task, he's wandering the world (the scroll isn't in a safe-deposit box, no, it's in that leather pouch he carries with him) in search of the next guardian. For some reason that has to do more with market forces than Eastern transcendentalism, that choice is one New York droog named Kar, played by Seann William Scott, that crooked-smile guy from the "American Pie" movies.

But meanwhile, that old Nazi (Karel Roden), his granddaughter (the blond Victoria Smurfit) and assorted thuggish henchmen in Armani suits are still trying to glom onto the scroll. Meanwhile, a chick named Jade (Jamie King) is hanging around, kung fuing it up, too.

Well, it never makes much sense COMPLEXITEIT. Okay, you say, it's martial arts, it doesn't have to make sense. Fair enough. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

But I think the film would have been helped, even within the narrow scope of its ambitions, if instead of the genial Chow, it had starred an authentic martial arts practitioner. And it would have helped if instead of the angularly amusing Scott, the kid role had also gone to someone who knew a kung from a fu.

As it is, the fighting sequences are all computer-assisted. They're not young Jackie Chan exhibitions of blinding speed, grace, courage and stamina; rather, they're some kid sitting at a computer terminal, hitting keys that cause gravity and physics and logic to take a nap while Chow corkscrews through the air 17 times, does a double back flip and kicks somebody's teeth out. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL

Review 4:

Bulletproof Monk (2003)

FILM REVIEW; Getting Serious Might Spoil the Quest for 'the Ultimate'

By A. O. SCOTT

New York Times

Published: April 16, 2003

In "Bulletproof Monk" Chow Yun-Fat and Seann William Scott are a multicultural, multigenerational mentor-and-protégé team uniting to prevent a precious Tibetan text called the Scroll of the Ultimate from falling into the wrong hands, which in this case are the hands of a very nasty Nazi (Karel Roden) who still dreams of world domination. I doubt there is much more I can say that will influence your opinion of this movie, which opens nationwide today.

There are, generally speaking, two kinds of people in the modern film audience: those who care about defending the Scroll of the Ultimate and those who don't.

It's not entirely clear which group Paul Hunter **REGISSEUR**, who directed this Hong Kong-style action comedy, or Ethan Rieff and Cyrus Voris, who adapted the screenplay from a popular comic book, belong to **CONTEXT CBA**, and this turns out to be a good thing. Too much seriousness can be fatal to a picture like this one, since it impedes the efficient delivery of dumb laughter and easy thrills **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT – SPANNING/SUSPENS**.

The prologue, set in Tibet in 1943, establishes the right tone, as two Tibetan monks, speaking their native language accompanied by subtitles, suddenly switch to English, suggesting that neither consistency nor verisimilitude is a very high priority. Then, just to confirm that impression, there is a lot of shooting and some twirling-and-flying martial arts acrobatics **COMPLEXITEIT**.

Sixty years later the surviving monk (Mr. Chow), rendered immune to age by the scroll's awesome power **ENTERTAINMENT** (and perhaps by a limited prosthetics budget), arrives in an anonymous North American city, hoping to find his successor. The most unlikely -- and therefore the obvious -- candidate is a pickpocket (Mr. Scott) who also works at a rundown Kung Fu cinema, where he has taught himself to fight (sloppily, according to his mentor's accurate estimate).

The young man calls himself Kar, the punning possibilities of which are exploited only once, by his love interest, rival and fellow adept, the lovely Jade (Jaime King). "How do you like my armored car, Kar?" she asks, with exquisite timing, just after she has smacked the living daylights out of him on the living-room floor of her mansion, a fight that serves as a bracing substitute for a sex scene. Then they climb into said car and head off to confront the Nazi and his evil blond granddaughter (Victoria Smurfit).

Do Kar, Jade and the monk (whom the pair refer to as "monk") save the scroll, and thus the world? Guess. Or don't. The pleasures of this movie are not to be found in the subtlety or persuasiveness of its plot, whose very haphazardness seems like a homage to the cheap, gritty glory days of Hong Kong cinema, when sensation always trumped sense. The lighting is bad, the editing of the action sequences sometimes messy, but these infelicities **ORIGINALITEIT- POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**, curiously enough, increase the fun rather than diminishing it. **ENTERTAINMENT**

Whether the weary, patient amusement Mr. Chow registers as he trips over his English lines belongs to the actor or the lama he plays is hardly relevant; his charisma is infinite, and he

finds a perfect foil in the slack-jawed, manic Mr. Scott. They seem to be having a very good time, and why should they be the only ones?

Bulletproof Monk is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned). It has many scenes of comic-book style violence, some of which would be disturbing if their context was not so silly.

**Review 5:
'Bulletproof Monk'**

Good odd-couple chemistry and decent fight scenes can't save the formulaic film from its comic-book origins. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

**Los Angeles Times
15-04-03**

By Kenneth Turan, Times Staff Writer

If the best thing about "Bulletproof Monk" is its snappy title -- and it is -- the most surprising thing is that the dialogue is in English. Though made for a major studio with a recognizable cast, it is hard to differentiate it from the standard-issue Hong Kong-style dubbed programmers that first introduced the martial arts to American audiences.

More a middling diversion than anything more noteworthy, "Bulletproof" benefits from the odd-couple casting chemistry between its stars, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's" Chow Yun-Fat and Seann William Scott of "American Pie" and "Dude, Where's My Car?" We're talking guys who really don't speak the same language.

This shrewd coupling aside, it is hard to fight the notion that "Bulletproof" is dumber and more generic than it needs to be. **COMPLEXITEIT - ORIGINALITEIT.** Directed by Paul Hunter **REGISSEUR**, the latest commercial and music video director to make a mindless transition to features, the film lacks the smarts and the skill that made both "Crouching Tiger" and "The Matrix" such deserved hits. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

Instead it putters along in its standard way, throwing in enough acceptable fighting to keep the die-hards happy but, even with over-use of computerized effects, never doing enough to take our breath away. **SUBTILITEIT**

"Bulletproof Monk" began life as a comic book, and screenwriters Ethan Reiff and Cyrus Voris, ever respectful of that lineage, have not allowed the film's dialogue or plot points to rise above their cartoonish origins. **CONTEXT CBA - SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

The action begins in 1943 Tibet at something called the Temple of Sublime Truth, where a young monk (Chow) is told the secret of the Scroll of Ultimate Truth. It contains words so powerful that should anyone read all of it, even if they yawn or move their lips, they will gain the power to control the world.

The monk learns this because he has fulfilled the three noble prophecies and is about to become the new guardian of the scroll. This job changes regularly every 60 years, like an oil change on an extremely economical car.

But all is not tranquil in mountainous Tibet. A horde of Nazis, those most convenient of villains, wants the scroll to further their own nefarious aims. Led by Strucker of the SS (Karel Roden), they

barge into the Temple of Sublime Truth like it was a Munich beer hall. (Maybe they couldn't read the sign.) But it's all for naught -- the scroll escapes and so does the monk.

Cut to 60 years later, which is, like, today. It's time for another oil change but the monk is now in a major metropolitan area where the modern equivalent of Nazis, husky guys in black suits with telephone cords coming out of their ears, are after the scroll under the direction of the villainous Nina (Victoria Smurfit), a ringer for Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS.

Just in time, the monk crosses paths with Kar (Scott), a cocky young pickpocket who just happens to know a thing or two about the martial arts.

The monk tolerantly views Kar as a compassionate guy hobbled by impure thoughts, which is kind of the way inevitable love interest Bad Girl (Jaime King) looks at him. Could this young rascalion with major discipline problems possibly be the next Bulletproof Monk?

Chow Yun-Fat, whose English is ever so slowly improving from film to film, mostly gets to use it reciting a string of fake Buddhist platitudes of the "water which is too pure has no fish" variety. And Scott's dialogue, frankly, is even less memorable. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**

Oblivious to how formulaic and uninvolved all this gets is director Hunter, who to all intents and purposes seems to view the film as one long Diet Pepsi spot. It's a good thing the Buddha didn't live to see this.

5 Offline reviews: A History of Violence

Review 1:

Learning violence from the inside out

Mick LaSalle, Chronicle Movie Critic
San Francisco Chronicle
Friday, September 23, 2005

But for director David Cronenberg and the commitment of his actors, "A History of Violence" might have been a cartoony action film. Its origins are in a cartoon, of sorts -- specifically, in a graphic novel, by John Wagner and Vince Locke **CONTEXT CBA**. But although the movie maintains, and benefits from, the bare bones of a straight-up action story, what emerges onscreen is deeper and more interesting. "A History of Violence" is a psychological thriller and, in its own idiosyncratic way, a rumination on character. **COMPLEXITEIT**

There's not a wasted moment. Yet the pace is measured. Every character gets his due, every environment feels lived in **GEVOEL VAN PARTICIPATIE**, and every bit of story information comes grounded in detail about character and relationships **SUBTILITEIT**. Cronenberg **REGISSEUR** presses the movie forward, which in this case is not synonymous with simply advancing the story. Cronenberg is also advancing not an idea so much as an impression of violence as something hovering over virtually all human interaction, like the air people breathe. It's not always there, but it always might be there. It can make itself known at any moment.

And, of course, Viggo Mortensen is ready for anything that might happen. Having slain a succession of monsters in the "Lord of the Rings" sagas, Mortensen finds himself doing some of the same work as Tom, the mild-mannered owner of a diner in small-town Indiana **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. It's a role that soon reveals itself as playing to Mortensen's strengths -- his humility, his forcefulness and a certain odd unknowable quality. **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT** Even before Tom proves himself a capable man when danger lurks, there's something about Mortensen -- or is it something he does as an actor? -- that makes the audience think, "No. There has to be more to this guy."

Maybe it's the sex scene between Tom and his wife (Maria Bello) that makes us respect him in advance. Early in the film, Tom and his wife have a merry romp in bed that goes to the edge of the R rating. Once again, Bello, who was the girlfriend of William H. Macy in "The Cooler," is lucky with her screen lover. As far as guys in movies go, this husband is attentive and enthusiastic. The scene establishes the bond between Mr. and the Mrs. which, like the sex, is not corny. It has some edges to it. **ORIGINALITEIT**

Then destiny arrives one night in the form of two murderous drifters, who walk into Tom's diner at closing time, intent on starting trouble. They don't just want to rob the place. Tom makes the calculation (which Mortensen lets us see): They want to kill people. And so Tom does what anybody would do in that situation and ends up a hero, with his story talked up on the national cable news networks. That's all great, until some gangsters in Philadelphia see those news stories and show up the next day in Indiana. They think Tom isn't Tom. They think he's some gangster named Joey, who ran away from Philadelphia 20 years ago.

Ed Harris plays the head gangster, a man in a dark suit who rides around in a black Lincoln and who will not be persuaded, not for one second, that Tom isn't Joey. "Joey, you're trying so hard to be this other guy, it's really painful to watch," he says. It's bad enough these gangsters think he's Joey, but even worse, they really don't like Joey. And Tom has nowhere to hide. As Hemingway knew when he wrote "The Killers," there's something really helpless about a man stuck behind a counter.

From this platform, Cronenberg builds the suspense **SPANNING/SUSPENS**, the sense of everything converging and closing in. Parallels are drawn between Tom's experiences and that of his son (Ashton Holmes), who is contending with bullies in school. The idea is that there's no relief and no shelter, anywhere, which is something Tom seems to understand intuitively. It's what makes him interesting and what makes the movie more than just a routine thriller. He knows violence from the inside out.

Mortensen is the main attraction, but this is everybody's show, with Bello passionate and fierce as his wife and Harris exuding an eerie reasonableness as the gangster who can't be dissuaded. Also worth noting is William Hurt, who is flamboyant in a featured role as yet another Philadelphia gangster, who is well dressed and gregarious but, in the best old-movie-gangster tradition, fairly stupid.

Review 2:

A History of Violence

BY ROGER EBERT / September 23, 2005
Chicago Sun-Times

David Cronenberg says his title "A History of Violence" has three levels: It refers (1) to a suspect with a long history of violence; (2) to the historical use of violence as a means of settling disputes, and (3) to the innate violence of Darwinian evolution, in which better-adapted organisms replace those less able to cope. "I am a complete Darwinian," says Cronenberg, whose new film is in many ways about the survival of the fittest -- at all costs.

INTERPRETATIE

In a small Indiana town, Tom Stall ([Viggo Mortensen](#)) runs one of those friendly little diners that acts as the village crossroads and clearing-house. He's the kind of guy everybody likes, married to a lawyer named Edie ([Maria Bello](#)), father of the teenager Jack (Ashton Holmes) and young Sarah (Heidi Hayes). He has one of those middle American accents in which every word translates into "I'm just folks."

So persuasive are these Indiana scenes that, despite the movie's opening moments, we wonder if Cronenberg has abandoned his own history of violence and decided to make a small-town slice of life: **A Capra picture, perhaps VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**, with [Viggo Mortensen](#) as [Jimmy Stewart](#). Then all hell breaks loose. Two tough guys enter the diner to try a stickup. They have guns, mean business, threaten the customers and a waitress. Moving so quickly he seems to have been practicing the scene as choreography, Tom Stall takes out the two guys and ends up on the local front pages as a hero.

He makes a shy hero. He doesn't want to give interviews or talk about what he has done, and there are strained moments in his household as his wife worries about a seismic shift in his mood, and his son can't understand an unstated change in their relationship. Read no further if you want to preserve the reasons for these changes.

Tom Stall, as it turns out, has a secret he has been guarding for 20 years. He is not named Tom Stall but Joey, is not from Indiana but from Philadelphia, has tried to start a new life in a small town and failed because of this unexpected publicity. Soon more strangers arrive in town: Carl Fogarty ([Ed Harris](#)) turns up with two hard men in his employ. Something really bad has happened to Carl earlier in life, and we don't want to know how his face got that way.

Tom Stall has transformed himself so completely into a small town family man that maybe there were years when he believed the story himself. The arrival of Fogarty makes that an illusion impossible to sustain, and he must return to Philadelphia and to an extraordinary scene with a man named Richie Cusack ([William Hurt](#)), whose role in Tom (or Joey's) life I will leave for you to discover. Let me say that Hurt has done a lot of good acting in a lot of intriguing roles, but during his brief screen time in "[A History of Violence](#)" he sounds notes we have not heard before.

Another important element in the plot involves the Stall family, especially Edie the wife and Jack the son. What do you do when you discover that your husband or father has concealed everything about his early life? Was he lying to you, or protecting you? Did you love someone who did not really exist? **COMPLEXITEIT**

Cronenberg is a director with a wide range, usually played by the left hand. He has ventured into horror, the macabre, science fiction, satire and the extremely peculiar. In his 2003 film "[Spider](#)," he starred [Ralph Fiennes](#) as a mental patient in a halfway house whose reality balances between everyday details and haunting memories of his past. "[Dead Ringers](#)" (1988) has [Jeremy Irons](#) in a dual role as twins, one not so nice, the other not so nice, either. "[Dead Zone](#)" (1983) has [Christopher Walken](#) losing five years of his life and becoming a different kind of person. These shifts in personal reality seem fascinating to Cronenberg. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

But what is Cronenberg saying about Tom, or Joey? Which life is the real one? The nature of Joey's early life was established by the world he was born into. His second life was created by conscious choice. Which is dominant, nature or nurture? Hyde, or Jekyll? Are we kidding ourselves when we think we can live peacefully? Is our peace purchased at the price of violence done elsewhere? In "[A History of Violence](#)," it all comes down to this: If Tom Stall had truly been the cheerful small-town guy he pretended to be, he would have died in that diner. It was Joey who saved him. And here is the crucial point: Because of Joey, the son Jack, makes discoveries about himself that he might not have ever needed (or wanted) to make.

"[A History of Violence](#)" seems deceptively straightforward, coming from a director with Cronenberg's quirky complexity. But think again **COMPLEXITEIT – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. This is not a movie about plot, but about character. It is about how people turn out the way they do, and about whether the world sometimes functions like a fool's paradise. I never give a moment's thought about finding water to drink. In New Orleans a few weeks ago, would I have been willing to steal from stores or fight other people for drinkable water? Yes, if it meant life for myself and my family. But I would have made a pitiful thief and fighter, and probably would have failed.

Since I am wandering, let me wander farther: At the Toronto Film Festival I saw a screening of "Nanook of the North," the great documentary about Eskimos surviving in the hostile arctic wilderness. They live because they hunt and kill. Of the three levels "[A History of Violence](#)" refers to, I think Cronenberg is most interested in the third, in the survival of the fittest. Not the good, the moral, the nice, but the fittest. The movie is based on the graphic novels by [John Wagner](#) and [Vince Locke](#). It could also be illuminated by *The Selfish Gene*, by [Richard Dawkins](#). I think that's why Cronenberg gives his hero a son: To show that Jack inherited what he did not ever suspect his father possessed. **CONTEXT CBA**

Review 3: **'A History of Violence'**

Naturalistic storytelling, strong acting punch up Cronenberg's look at the effects of brutality.

Los Angeles Times

22-09-05

By Kenneth Turan, Times Staff Writer

"A History of Violence" is a ticking time bomb of a movie, a gripping, incendiary, casually subversive piece of work that marries pulp watchability with larger concerns without skipping a beat **GEBRUIK HAT**. It's a tightly controlled film about an out-of-control situation: the predilection for violence in America and how that affects both individuals and the culture as a whole.

It's the gift of "Violence," which stars Viggo Mortensen and Maria Bello and features terrific support from Ed Harris and William Hurt, that it manages to do all these things without seeming to make a fuss. That's how strong and compelling its dead-on plot is, and how much command of the medium veteran Canadian director David Cronenberg demonstrates.

With more than a dozen features to his credit over three decades as a director, **Cronenberg REGISSEUR** is a filmmaker whose previous work, from "Scanners" to "Naked Lunch," "Dead Ringers" and "The Fly," has usually played out on reality's farthest shores. But not this time.

Working from a script by Josh Olson adapted from John Wagner and Vince Locke's graphic novel, Cronenberg reprises the naturalistic style he used in 1983's underappreciated "The Dead Zone" **CONTEXT CBA**. His protagonists are Tom and Edie Stall (Mortensen and Bello), believably happily married and "living the American dream," as one character puts it, with their two children in bucolic Millbrook, Ind. "I'm the luckiest son of a bitch alive," Tom says early on, with Edie replying feelingly, "You are the best man I know. No luck involved."

"I enjoyed that aspect of the film, it was like a free gift," the director explained when "Violence" debuted at Cannes **ENTERTAINMENT**. "When you're inventing weird stuff, you have to start from scratch so the audience gets it. The dynamics of family are so understood you can start from a higher level and go further. You get the gift of emotional intensity, people relate and are drawn in in a way a bizarre fantasy never could accomplish."

Though Cronenberg didn't say so, having normally excessive directors attach themselves to nominally conventional stories has other benefits. Even when they're on their best behavior, filmmakers like Cronenberg can't help but add their own provocative, off-kilter tone to the material. And because these sensibilities are filtered through a deceptively straightforward story, the effect is disturbing in ways that more fantastical tales, easily dismissible as unrealistic, rarely are.

It's a measure of Cronenberg's confidence in his material, his cast and his own skill that he purposely opens this ultimately compelling film with a glacially paced sequence of a pair of drifters checking out of a motel at a velocity that only Jim Jarmusch in full "Broken Flowers" mode could love.

It's apparent almost at once that these are not the best of men, and with the introduction of Stall, owner-operator of Millbrook's popular luncheonette, we know in the pit of our stomachs that a collision is inevitable.

Beyond that early confrontation, however, all bets are off as "Violence" changes narrative direction and focus frequently without ever losing sight of the ideas behind its breakneck plot. **COMPLEXITEIT**

For what this film is concerned with more than anything is the pernicious, corrosive effects of violence, the way its pervasive taint is as hard to rub off as blood is to wash out. Each act of mayhem in the film, however seemingly justified, simply begets yet another one, until it starts

to seem axiomatic that once you let violence into your life it will never leave you alone, never allow anything to be the same. The question is, once you've taken someone's life, can you ever be a whole person again? ORIGINALITEIT

Despite its subject matter, "Violence" never loses sight of a resolve not to go overboard à la Quentin Tarantino in its depiction of violence VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS. What we see is strong enough to give the film an R rating, but Cronenberg's veteran cameraman Peter Suschitzky and editor Ronald Sanders never stray from the director's determination to make the violence what he's called, echoing Thomas Hobbes' famous line, "nasty, brutish and short."

What Stall does to get the plot in gear would fit a classic movie definition of heroism, but this nontraditional film is more concerned with not letting us forget that it is also violent, and as such has an effect on all the relationships in Stall's life, including his intimate moments with his wife and how he interacts with his teenage son, Jack, and his younger daughter, Sarah (Ashton Holmes and Heidi Hayes, both making strong feature debuts).

The instant celebrity Stall achieves with his actions in this age of media overkill has an especially unexpected result. It's an indication of how much his life has been changed that it draws to town Carl Fogarty (Harris), an East Coast mobster with a ravaged face and an insinuating manner who inexplicably insists that Stall is someone he knows from the past. Both Harris and a fellow mobster played by Hurt are indelible, savagely theatrical characterizations, brilliant encapsulations of controlled, bitter menace that show sides of both actors that we've never really seen before.

From an acting point of view, however, this film belongs to Mortensen and Bello as a severely challenged husband and wife FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT. Making use of Mortensen's sweetness and vulnerability as well as his "Lord of the Rings" physicality, Tom Stall is one of the best roles Mortensen has had, and he takes full advantage of it. Matching her costar's level of commitment, Bello gives her most involving performance, supplying a level of emotional belief that is the film's secret weapon, holding it together no matter where it goes. SUBTILITEIT

"A History of Violence" finally belongs to the man who held the entire equation of the film in his head and made it add up, David Cronenberg. Yes, the director admitted in Cannes, this effort on one level does not seem as initially challenging as some of the films he's done before. On the other hand, "it has a simplicity, such a transparency that you can see through it into something else that is underneath. And that something else is quite disturbing." Quite disturbing indeed. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

Review 4:

David Cronenberg stirs up danger in 'A History of Violence'

By Wesley Morris
Boston Globe
09/23/2005

For more than 25 years, Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg REGISSEUR has been making movies about man's fatal attraction to the extreme -- be it electronic ("Videodrome"), scientific ("The Fly"), medical ("Dead Ringers"), transgender ("M. Butterfly"), narcotic ("Naked Lunch"), erotic ("Crash"), virtual ("eXistenZ"), or psychological ("Spider"). His latest movie, "A

"History of Violence," is something of a change-up. A mild-mannered, small-town fellow is accused of having gone to grisly extremes in the past.

The film has the perverse intelligence of Cronenberg's other movies. It's not his best, but it is certainly his most accessible **COMPLEXITEIT**, least stagy work **ORIGINALITEIT**, obeying the laws of chronology and serving up characters whom we recognize as people. The movie's brilliance resides in its use of cinematic **GEBRUIK HAT** convention to shatter an illusion of social normalcy **INTERPRETATIE**.

The Stalls, whose home is perched on a handsome plot of land in Millbrook, Ind., are an average Middle-American clan, untroubled and happy. The adults, Tom (Viggo Mortensen) and Edie (Maria Bello), are still wildly attracted to each other, and the teenage son, Jack (Ashton Holmes), gets along great with Mom and Dad despite his pot smoking and woes at school.

The family's placid state is broken after two men show up at the diner Tom owns, just as it's about to close for the night. They try to rob the place, but in a nimbly choreographed sequence, Tom turns from his neighborly self into an efficient defenseman, killing his assailants and becoming a celebrity in the process.

But the heroic glow brings out the strangest things in the Stalls. Jack, for one, doesn't merely stand up to the school bully the day after his father's incident, he bludgeons him. The sweet kid turns into a rebellious teen who would put a scare into any punk on the WB.

Soon an unwanted visitor, played with hammy malice by Ed Harris dressed in a black suit, slithers out of the woodwork and into the diner. He insinuates that our hero is actually someone named Joey. Tom is baffled. Edie is outraged. And "A History of Violence" starts looking like a noirish action movie reframed within the contours of a Western.

This is a hard film to be more detailed about because Cronenberg has so richly booby-trapped his question of whether Tom is or was a killing machine. Needless to say, Harris's character and his impossible accusation spark a note of disharmony in the Stall household that had probably been roiling just beneath the surface all along.

"A History of Violence" has been adapted by Josh Olson from a graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke, and Cronenberg seems to have attempted to duplicate the deliberate, flat dimensions of a comic book **CONTEXT CBA**. The early first scenes of the picture often seem like a gravely serious cartoon, which, ironically, frees the movie to be funny, though without ever feeling frivolous. In fact, the film's equilibrium is poised on a line between comedy and peril, a precarious balance best demonstrated in the contrast of two sex scenes between Tom and Edie. **SUBTILITEIT – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

One happens before Harris shows up: Edie puts on a cheerleader's costume and pretends to be in her girlhood bedroom with her parents just down the hall. The other happens after. Both are funny, but the second one is charged with the animal danger that the initial tryst used as an erotic fantasy.

Not all the subversions hang together. The film feels disjointed, particularly toward the end, but afterward it blooms in the memory **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**. The tone deepens as the story develops, in much the same way that the exuberant cheapness in the first half of David Lynch's "Mulholland Drive" turns out to be an elaborate hoax. Cronenberg is not toying with us as Lynch was; instead, he's challenging us. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

People showing up for a Viggo Mortensen action vehicle will be bummed at how commercially abnormal "A History of Violence" is. It's an essay about human nature and the struggle against it **INTERPRETATIE**. The film is also intensely curious about what movie violence means for the characters provoked to engage in it **COMPLEXITEIT**. Yet Cronenberg likes movies too much for this one to be an anti-entertainment deconstruction of them.

ENTERTAINMENT

The bone crushing and shootouts supply the visceral kick they're supposed to. The sex is hot. The menace is palpable. **And the performances of Mortensen, Bello, and Holmes are excellent** **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. In other words, "A History of Violence" is a real-life movie with disturbing dramatic implications. The impossibly happy family that sat around the breakfast table at the start of the picture is drastically altered come the supper at the end.

Review 5:

The Likable Face of 'Violence'

By Desson Thomson

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, September 23, 2005

"Whatever it is, I fear Greeks even when they bring gifts," says Laocoon in Virgil's "Aeneid" as he and his fellow Trojans contemplated the enormous wooden horse outside their fortified walls. His instincts are right: A contingent of Greek warriors lay huddled inside, waiting for the right moment to release the hatch and rout Troy.

"A History of Violence" is a Trojan horse with a similarly nasty surprise **INTERPRETATIE**. Packed inside David Cronenberg's **REGISSEUR** latest film, which presents itself as gift-wrapped, shoot-'em-up entertainment **ENTERTAINMENT**, is a sobering reflection on our culture's attitude toward violence **INTERPRETATIE**. By making us root for a very likable, small-town hero (Viggo Mortensen), who must resort to extreme measures to protect himself and his family from thugs, the Canadian filmmaker is essentially forcing us to confront troubling questions. Is killing excused by moral imperative? Where does heroism end and vigilantism begin?

Cronenberg cannily references the Western mythology of Hollywood as he lures us into the heartland community of Tom Stall (Mortensen). Everyone knows each other in this sleepy Indiana hamlet, pop. 3,246, and nothing much happens except the raising of families, churchgoing and the pursuit of happiness. **COMPLEXITEIT**

Tom runs the most popular diner in Millbrook. He kisses his wife, Edie (Maria Bello), before he goes to work, cheerfully picks up trash on the street on his way into the restaurant. Edie's a devoted wife, a powerful lawyer and a good mother to their two children and, when the bedroom door is closed, she knows how to play naughty.

"Be quiet," she whispers into Tom's ear, skimped out in a cheerleader skirt. "My parents are in the next room."

The object of this seduction, however, isn't Tom. It's us. Cronenberg is hooking the audience into Tom's life and, by extension, small-town America **INTERPRETATIE**. By the time two threatening strangers (Stephen McHattie and Greg Bryk) barge into Stall's Diner around closing time, we're ready to get behind Tom in anything he does. Little do we suspect our trust and empathy will become treacherous liabilities.

When Tom tells the intruders his kitchen is closed, the men become belligerent. Moments later, Tom, his staff and a few stragglers are staring at drawn guns. When one stranger aims his weapon at the waitress by the door, Tom swings his coffeepot into the other man's face, grabs his gun and pumps the second gunman with bullets. The first man plunges a knife into his foot before Tom dispatches him, too.

Tom is stunningly efficient, and we're too exhilarated to consider the gory aftermath. But Cronenberg refuses to spare us the spattery details. The faces of the slain -- in this and subsequent scenes -- aren't just bloodied; they're grotesquely disfigured.

Within 24 hours, Tom's a media hero. The assailants lie toe-tagged in the morgue. When Tom emerges, bandaged and triumphant from the hospital, Millbrook residents are waiting to applaud. Evil has been overcome -- or has it?

After his own personal Morning in America, Tom gets another unsavory visitor at the diner. This time, it's Carl Fogaty (Ed Harris), a grim individual who hides a terrible scar behind his shades.

Flanked by dark-suited goons, he parks in front of Tom's counter and sarcastically compliments his heroism. He insists on calling him Joey.

"Who's Joey?" asks Tom, puzzled.

"You are," says Carl, who claims to know Tom from a previous chapter in his life. He wonders aloud how it is, exactly, that an unassuming diner proprietor could shoot so expertly. Although Tom gets the sheriff to chase Carl out of town, it's not the last Tom's family will hear of him. Despite Tom's insistence that he was "just lucky," Edie begins to wonder. Has Tom been living a double life? Who is the man that fathered her children, who sleeps by her side?

The filmmaker who gave us "Spider," "The Fly," "eXistenZ," "Crash" and "Naked Lunch" -- stories about shadow lives -- slowly begins to tear the gift-wrap. Tom's socially withdrawn son, Jack (Ashton Holmes), has been suffering at the hands of a high school bully. After he watches his father transform from coffee pourer to family defender, he changes, too.

"In this family, we do not solve problems by hitting people," says Tom, after Jack has been taken before the principal.

"No," retorts Jack. "In this family we shoot them."

And the audience erupts with laughter **HUMOR**. But the gallows humor is really Cronenberg's subtle warning that our first reactions aren't necessarily the right ones. The possibility that Tom isn't everything we believed in is also taking uncomfortable root. Whether there's anything to this suspicion is the exciting business of the rest of the movie. **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT** As climactic events unfold, little touches earlier in the film -- such as Tom's daughter waking up screaming from a nightmare about monsters -- illustrate the ominous underpinnings that were always there. **SUBTILITEIT - COMPLEXITEIT**

"A History of Violence" forces us to confront our Pavlovian conditioning to violence, whether we are watching real military campaigns with living room detachment or whooping and hollering for fictional ones. It's not about popcorn heroism or the importance of protecting an increasingly troubled world against hostile invaders. It's just about why we're cheering.

5 offline reviews: V for Vendetta

Review 1:

Frighful questions about terrorism

By AMY BIANCOLLI Copyright 2006 Houston Chronicle

March 17, 2006, 9:59AM

Can a terrorist be a hero? If you answer no — if you blanch just seeing the question in print — keep far, far away from *V for Vendetta*, a gravely unsettling dystopian saga about a masked revolutionary bent on destroying the British Parliament. VOORSPELLING REACTIE – GEBRUIK HAT *Vendetta*'s answer is "yes." Yes, a terrorist can be a hero. Yes, violence can be justified, even necessary, in the fight against oppressive regimes. And, yes, in the words of V, its alliterative desperado, "blowing up a building can change the world."

He has British architecture in mind, but the twin shadows of the World Trade Center inevitably loom over this dense and glowering film, which uses a futuristic totalitarian regime to skewer political fear-mongering and popular complacency in every age, including this one CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK - INTERPRETATIE. "People should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people," declares V in the film's most obvious call to arms.

But as manifestoes go, this one's a beauty: draped like a funeral, smart as a whip and full of black-hearted Romantic monologues and dramatically slit necks. Directed by James McTeigue (assistant director on the *Matrix* trilogy) REGISSEUR from a script by Andy and Larry Wachowski (*Matrix* writer-directors), *V for Vendetta* is based on the seminally depressive graphic novel by writer Alan Moore and illustrator David Lloyd. Moore has loudly disowned the movie and wiped his name from the credits. CONTEXT CBA

But Lloyd's name remains, and if the movie veers from the book at times, the filmmakers have worked hard to honor his creation. Most important, they get V right. He's charismatic; he's unhinged; he's obsessed with the letter "V" ("we will one day vindicate the vigilant and the virtuous"). With his Zorro hat, Zorro cape, signature consonant and pageboy flip, he might seem fey, but this crime fighter takes cover behind no weenie little scarf SUBTILITEIT. Instead he wears a Fawkes mask, in grinning homage to the Guy who conspired to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605.

V atomizes the Old Bailey courthouse in the movie's opening spectacle, and he plans something similar for Parliament. He also plans to eliminate a long list of fascist nasties who had abused him in the past, a tragic back story being the key to every anti-hero. He is exquisitely, rapturously lonely — lonely in a minor key, with roses. When he rescues a woman (an impassioned Natalie Portman), she becomes his accomplice, then his prisoner, then his friend. He grows to love her in his silent, wounded way (despite torturing her later on: minor point). But still, he never removes his mask. She cannot transform this Beast.

Three things make this work. One is the silken power of Hugo Weaving as V, FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT whose elegant body language and lusciously textured line readings recall Claude Rains' classic turns in *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Invisible Man* VERGELIJKING FILMS. Two is the film's unwavering air of apocalyptic dread, held steady by Adrian Biddle's noir-tinged cinematography and a masterful supporting cast that includes John Hurt as a hysterical despot, SUBTILITEIT- SPANNING/SUSPENS Tim Pigott-Smith as his venal enforcer and Stephen Rea as a decent, unflappable cop.

Finally, the script: It's intelligent, literate, even talky, focused on character over mere exploding buildings and crammed with allusions to *Faust*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Tchaikovsky's *1812* and Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* CONNECTIE HOGE KUNST – SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT - COMPLEXITEIT. Fanboys will tell you the Beethoven is a nod to the Latin numeral five, or "V," rendered in Morse code during the piece's opening theme (dit-dit-dit dah). Well, why not? This is an erudite terrorist we're talking about, a truly educated man. And maybe that's the most heroic thing of all.

Review 2:

V for Vendetta

BY ROGER EBERT / March 16, 2006
Chicago Sun-Times

It is the year 2020. A virus runs wild in the world, most Americans are dead, and Britain is ruled by a fascist dictator who promises security but not freedom. One man stands against him, the man named V, who moves through London like a wraith despite the desperate efforts of the police. He wears a mask showing the face of Guy Fawkes, who in 1605 tried to blow up the houses of Parliament. On Nov. 5, the eve of Guy Fawkes Day, British schoolchildren for centuries have started bonfires to burn Fawkes in effigy. On this eve in 2020, V saves a young TV reporter named Evey from rape at the hands of the police, forces her to join him, and makes a busy night of it by blowing up the Old Bailey courtrooms.

"[V for Vendetta](#)" will follow his exploits for the next 12 months, until the night when he has vowed to strike a crushing blow against the dictatorship. We see a police state that hold citizens in an iron grip and yet is humiliated by a single man who seems impervious. The state tries to suppress knowledge of his deeds -- to spin a plausible explanation for the destruction of the Old Bailey, for example. But V commandeers the national television network to claim authorship of his deed.

This story was first told as a graphic novel written by Alan Moore and published in 1982 and 1983 **CONTEXT CBA**. Its hero plays altogether differently now, and yet, given the nature of the regime, is he a terrorist or a freedom fighter **COMPLEXITEIT?** Britain is ruled by a man named Sutler, who gives orders to his underlings from a wall-sized TV screen and seems the personification of Big Brother. And is: Sutler is played by [John Hurt](#), who in fact played Winston Smith in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" (1984). (V seems more like Jack the Ripper, given his ability to move boldly in and out of areas the police think they control. The similarity may have come easily to Moore, whose graphic novel "From Hell" was about the Ripper, and inspired a good 2001 movie by the Hughes brothers. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

"[V for Vendetta](#)" has been written and co-produced by the Wachowski brothers, Andy and Larry, whose "Matrix" movies also were about rebels holding out against a planetary system of control **INTERPRETATIE - REGISSEUR**. This movie is more literary and less dominated by special effects (although there are plenty) **FOCUS SPEKTAKEL**, and is filled with ideas that are all the more intriguing because we can't pin down the message. Is this movie a parable about 2006, a cautionary tale or a pure fantasy? It can be read many ways, as I will no doubt learn in endless e-mails.

The character of V and his relationship with Evey ([Natalie Portman](#)) inescapably reminds us of the Phantom of the Opera **VERGELIJKING FILMS**. V and the Phantom are both masked, move through subterranean spaces, control others through the leverage of their imaginations and have a score to settle. One difference, and it is an important one, is that V's facial disguise does not move (unlike, say, the faces of a Batman villain) but is a mask that always has the same smiling expression. Behind it is the actor [Hugo Weaving](#), using his voice and body language to create a character, but I was reminded of my problem with Thomas the Tank Engine: If something talks, its lips should move.

Still, Portman's Evey has expressions enough for most purposes, as she morphs from a dutiful citizen to V's sympathizer, and the film is populated with a gallery of gifted character actors. In addition to Hurt as the sinister dictator, we see [Stephen Rea](#) and [Rupert Graves](#) as the police assigned to lead the search for V. [Tim Pigott-Smith](#) is an instrument of the dictator. These people exist in scenes designed to portray them as secure, until V sweeps in like a whirlwind, using martial arts, ingenious weapons and the element of surprise. Why the mask does not limit his peripheral vision is a question I will leave for the experts.

There are ideas in this film. The most pointed is V's belief: "People should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people." I am not sure V has it right;

surely in the ideal state governments and their people should exist happily together. Fear in either direction must lead to violence. But V has a totalitarian state to overthrow, and only a year to do it in, and we watch as he improvises a revolution. He gets little support, although [Stephen Fry](#) plays a dissident TV host who criticizes the government at his peril.

With most action thrillers based on graphic novels, we simply watch the sound and light show. "[V for Vendetta](#)," directed by James McTeigue, almost always has something going on that is actually interesting, inviting us to decode the character and plot and apply the message where we will. There are times when you think the soundtrack should be supplying "Anarchy in the UK" by the Sex Pistols. The movie ends with a violent act that left me, as a lover of London, intensely unhappy; surely V's enemy is human, not architectural. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

The film has been disowned by Alan Moore, who also removed his name from the movie versions of his graphic novels *From Hell* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, but then any sane person would have been unhappy with the *Gentlemen*. His complaint was not so much with the films as with the deal involving the use of his work. I have not read the original work, do not know what has been changed or gone missing, but found an audacious confusion of ideas in "[V for Vendetta](#)" and enjoyed their manic disorganization. To attempt a parable about terrorism and totalitarianism that would be relevant and readable might be impossible, could be dangerous and would probably not be box office.

Review 3:
'V for Vendetta'
16-03-2006

In "[Vendetta](#)," from the Wachowski brothers, philosophies abound but aren't all that clear. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

By Carina Chocano, Times Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times

"V for Vendetta" is not a movie of ideas so much as it is an idea mall. By the time you've gotten through it, you feel spent, loaded down and more than a little disoriented. Part of the problem is that the movie's big concepts — violence begets violence, absolute power corrupts absolutely, everything is connected, my terrorist is your freedom fighter, etc. — are pithy, brief and irrefutable enough to embroider on throw pillows. **But its moral and philosophical stances amount to a free-for-all.** **COMPLEXITEIT**

The movie begins with a historical flashback to 1605, as Guy Fawkes is shown being seized, arrested and hanged. The scene is played for maximum pathos: A suffering lady looks toward the gallows with watery eyes. No surprise then, that, some four centuries into the future, what Evey Hammond (Natalie Portman) wants to know is, "But what of the man? Who was he really? What was he like?" A good question, which the movie declines to answer. Fawkes was an English soldier and Catholic dissident who conspired to kill King James I and blow up Parliament. He was caught in time, made to confess under torture and executed. On Nov. 5, Britons celebrate the thwarting of his plot by burning the guy in effigy — another detail also conveniently left out of the film, which would rather have us think of him as a cross between Zorro and Sid Vicious.

The character Evey is talking about is not Fawkes, anyway. He's a Fawkes-masked renegade (and accomplished fencer) code-named V, who employs terrorist tactics in the name of democracy. Written by Andy and Larry Wachowski and directed by James McTeigue **REGISSEUR**, the movie is based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore, who took his name off the project. **CONTEXT CBA** Published in 1989, the comics imagined a totalitarian England of

the not-too-distant future, in which a draconian Thatcherism predicated on order, conformity and intolerance has mushroomed into totalitarian repression. As the story goes, America's endless foreign war has led England into isolationism and panic, which an ambitious conservative politician has recognized and seized as a political tool, feeding public fear through deception of the most despicably murderous sort.

In the envisioning of this dystopia, Orwell is given the kind of homage that would make some people call their lawyers — the party motto, for instance, which is plastered all over town, is "strength through unity, unity through faith." Chancellor Adam Sutler (John Hurt, who played the oppressed and ultimately broken Winston Smith in "1984") has been swept into office by terrified Britons willing to relinquish democracy in return for protection. Soon, Sutler's henchmen are rounding up writers, artists, dissidents and gays for use in medical experiments, until someone blows up the facility — a patient, strangely resistant to the virus they've developed, who emerges from the flames looking like a barbecued sausage and howling with righteous anger. Soon, he'll be promoting anarchy in the U.K.

So far, so promising. But rather than show us a nightmare world in which even the mildest dissent can get you thrown in a cage with a hood over your head, it repeatedly tells us, in lengthy soliloquies, that England's citizens live under constant surveillance, cowering in fear. And yet every time a newscaster lies on the air, he or she is greeted by a hearty cry of "bollocks!" Winston Smith would think he'd died and gone to Disneyland.

As for what's permitted and what's not, it's pretty hard to say. Apparently, in the future, paintings by Vermeer, busts of Nefertiti and Velvet Underground songs covered by Cat Power will be banned, but the middle classes will live in spacious, comfortably appointed apartments. Butter will be scarce, but red spray paint will be readily available to any 9-year-old girl. **COMPLEXITEIT – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**

With such fuzzy parameters, it's no wonder the characters behave incongruously. Despite all the lengthy speeches about living in fear, they are risk-takers, lane-changers and, frankly, fickle dates. Evey, an assistant at the British Television Network, is surprisingly sanguine and plucky for someone who as a child watched her parents dragged away in the middle of the night with bags over their heads **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. We first meet her as she primps for a date, the firebrand TV pundit Lewis Prothero (Roger Allam), spewing bile in the background. Like apparently everyone else in England, Evey seems somewhat blithe about the whole brutal-regime thing. She doesn't deny herself the pleasure of talking back to the TV, nor does she allow curfew to impinge on her social life. She has a date with her boss, Gordon Dietrich (Stephen Fry), a popular television personality many years her senior, and she does her best to keep it, curfew be damned.

It's not that you begrudge Evey's taking the opportunity to advance her career, or even to meet new masked people. It's just that you'd think, you live in a brutality repressive state for most of your life, you look over your shoulder once in a while. Not her. Nor Gordon, who for a high-level media figure at a state-run station comports himself pretty naively. Nor even Det. Finch (Stephen Rea), who is assigned to track down the terrorist, and instead ends up confronting the truth about his leaders, daring even to ask questions out loud.

Evey and V (Hugo Weaving) meet in a dark alley when he saves her from government thugs. By way of introduction, he carves his logo, an encircled V, reminiscent of the symbol for anarchy, onto a government propaganda poster. Then he invites Evey along to watch him blow up the Old Bailey — step No. 1 in his plan to rouse the people of England out of their submissive stupor, rid them of their tyrant, and forge a democracy from heavy explosives. Step No. 2 will involve taking over the state-run, Fox News- and CNN-inspired channel, the British Television Network, and announcing to viewers that their government has lied to and manipulated them. Step No. 3 is a cinch: All that's left to do is to FedEx a Guy Fawkes mask to every soul in London, and watch everyone do the freedom march toward the big, incendiary finale.

With a wealth of new, real-life parallels to draw from in the areas of government surveillance, torture, fear-mongering and media manipulation, not to mention corporate corruption and religious hypocrisy, you can't really blame the filmmakers for having a field day referencing current events. Avian flu, attacks on the subway, "America's war," the INTERPRETATIE systematic persecution of gays and Muslims, profiteering pharmaceutical companies, conservative pundits cynically cultivating fear, news channels devoted to hatred and intolerance, vivid allusions to Abu Ghraib and references to Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria — it's all inside, right alongside the old standards, the AIDS epidemic and Nazism. Lacking genuine argument, though, it plays like a pastiche: the terror decade's greatest hits, extended dance remix.

"I've seen firsthand the power of ideas," Evey says in her opening voice-over, then veers into portentous non sequitur: "But you can't hold an idea, or kiss it." Indeed you can't. You also can't send it out for beer, or pass off a series of allusions as a story, or spackle plot holes by referencing spiritual philosophies. FOCUS SPEKTAKEL – COMPLEXITEIT - SUBTILITEIT In the saffron robe and shaved head of her post-captivity incarnation, Evey looks remarkably like a Tibetan monk. You know the reference is not accidental — as the movie continually reminds us, there are no coincidences. She's faced her death and lost her fear, and is suddenly prone to making pronouncements like "God is in the rain." At this point, it's hard not to be reminded of the old joke about the Buddhist and the hot dog vendor. V has made Evey one with everything. Everything is connected, but nothing adds up. Ambitious as it is, its inconsistencies bring "V for Vendetta" down. God may very well be in the rain, but the devil is in the details.

Review 4:

Bombs trump big ideas in potent 'Vendetta'

By Ty Burr
03/16/2006
Boston Globe

Something is wrong in the totalitarian state of England. Actually, everything is wrong: minorities, gays, and "radical" protesters have disappeared into death camps, the secret police known as "fingermen" rule the night, and the population has been bludgeoned into sheeplike compliance by wall-to-wall disaster reports in the media. The face of the rabid fascist leader Chancellor Sutler (John Hurt) looms from posters and TV screens, and you can almost taste the spittle from his lips.

"V for Vendetta" wants you to wonder how much of this sounds familiar, and, worse, how much of it might become familiar with a few twists of history's tail. INTERPRETATIE Then it wants you to root for the masked man who plans to blow it all up. Is he a terrorist or a freedom fighter, and what, exactly, defines the difference? The Wachowski brothers think they know. Anyone who gives thought to the matter may respond with one of their screenplay's favorite words: Bollocks.

Still, there's more on this movie's mind than the usual wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am the trailers are promising FOCUS SPEKTAKEL. In adapting the groundbreaking early-'80s comic book series

by writer Alan Moore and illustrator David Lloyd (since collected in paperback; it's well worth the read **CONTEXT CBA**), Andy and Larry Wachowski of "The Matrix" fame are betting that multiplex audiences are ready for a propulsive Orwellian drama disguised as an action flick **COMPLEXITEIT**. They've made a mainstream provocation at a time when we could use one -- even a muddled one -- and for that, they should probably be thanked.

Ever the prickly iconoclast, Moore has had his name removed from the film, but while "V for Vendetta" makes many changes to his story line, it does no essential violence to the work as a whole. A mysterious figure known only as V (Hugo Weaving) still rises from his shadowy lair to visit butt-kicking death upon various minions of the state: a bombastic right-wing TV host (Roger Allam), an archbishop (John Standing) with a thing for young girls.

V still wears a mask that evokes both Guy Fawkes (who plotted to blow up Parliament in 1605) and Edmund Dantes, the count of Monte Cristo. He still takes under his wing a fearful young woman named Evey (Natalie Portman) and teaches her to see the true enemy (he gets her to take the red pill, in other words), and he still talks a mellifluous blue streak that worked better on the page. **VERGELIJKING FILMS**

There's a good-hearted policeman named Finch (Stephen Rea), who with his loyal assistant (Rupert Graves) works to uncover V's grim back story against the advice of head fingerman Creedy (Tim Pigott-Smith) and Sutler himself. The trail leads to a secret experimental camp and a rueful lady scientist played touchingly by Sinead Cusack. It also leads to images of human bodies steamrollered into pits and covered with quicklime. The Wachowskis are playing with the gloves off.

In point of fact, the brothers have only produced and written "V for Vendetta," handing the directorial reins to "Matrix" assistant director James McTeigue **REGISSEUR**. Regardless of who did what, the movie's a handsome piece of work, dramatically powerful even when it backs into silliness **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**. The strongest sequences are lifted almost intact from the comic: the imprisonment and torture that harden Evey while freeing her soul, a flashback to the sad story of Valerie Banks (Natasha Wightman), movie star and victim of the state.

Even while the movie is set in a post-apocalyptic day after tomorrow -- America, we're told, has fallen into chaos after the war it started enveloped the world -- its concerns are of the moment. Specifically: What rights might a terrified populace give up in the name of promised safety, and how might a government wield that fear to its advantage? Some will praise or condemn the movie's message as an attack on Bush-ism run amok (Alan Moore was responding to Margaret Thatcher, actually), but that's too easy. The real villain is a cowed and lazy citizenry. Meaning all of us. **INTERPRETATIE**

Disappointingly, "V for Vendetta" makes this point early and moves on, at some point turning as shallow as what it protests against. POSITIEF/NEGATIEF (Let's pause to remember, for one thing, that Fawkes wanted to blow up Parliament so he could install a Catholic king on the throne. Freedom for the masses wasn't high on his to-do list.) The film comes close to being the inspired piece of agit-pop it's aiming for, and the performances are first-rate. GEBRUIK HATE: Portman, both with hair and without, atones for the woodenness of Queen Amidala, and Weaving -- well, he gives good voice behind that mask.

In the end, though, the Wachowskis' love of freedom -- of, in Moore's words, that 1 inch no one can ever take from us -- is trumped by their love of watching things go boom. Spoiler alert (except to those who've been following news of the movie over the last few months): "V for Vendetta" ends with the destruction of the Houses of Parliament -- conveniently empty, unlike the London underground trains and buses of July 7, 2005. The movie offers this as an intentionally controversial celebratory sequence, after which the faceless crowds stand revealed at last in their beautiful individuality.

That's a bravura image, yet you're forgiven if you find yourself pondering the individuality of real-life victims. Shortly after the planes smashed into the World Trade towers five years ago CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK -- after my daughter had come home from her Brooklyn school clutching a burnt memo that had blown across the river -- I wrote that I hoped never again to see a movie in which buildings blew up. I was referring to an Arnold Schwarzenegger film, but charges of irresponsibility can apply to a movie of ideas as well, if those ideas are glib. "V for Vendetta" says that terrorism's OK as long as no one really gets hurt, and to believe that, you need the wishful thinking of a child. Unfortunately, the world has grown up since Alan Moore set pen to paper. One wonders if the fan-boys ever will.

Review 5:

V for Vendetta (2006)

Who Is This Masked Avenger? Guy Fawkes, Count of Monte Cristo or a Clone?

By MANOHLA DARGIS

New York Times

Published: March 17, 2006

Thumb suckers of the world unite, the most hotly anticipated film of the, er, week, "[V for Vendetta](#)," has arrived, complete with manufactured buzz and some apparently genuine British outrage. Concocted by the same team behind the "[Matrix](#)" franchise, this future-shock story about a masked avenger at war with a totalitarian British regime was drawn along the usual Orwellian lines but is clearly meant to have more than a passing resemblance to our

current political environment. CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK – VERGELIJKING FILMS –
COMPLEXITEIT - INTERPRETATIE

Is the man in the mask who wants to make Parliament go boom Osama bin Laden or Patrick Henry? Or just a Phantom of the Opera clone who likes to kick back to the cult sounds of Antony and the Johnsons? Your guess is as good as mine, and I've seen the film.

COMPLEXITEIT

Written by Alan Moore and illustrated by David Lloyd, "V for Vendetta" originated as a limited comic series in the early 1980's, just around the time that Margaret Thatcher was re-elected for the second of three terms. CONTEXT CBA Like the comic, the film is set in a near future, though now the time stamp is circa 2020. America, glimpsed only in passing on television, is paralyzed by civil unrest, having unleashed worldwide havoc; Britain has fallen to fascism; no word yet, though, on Luxembourg.

The usual totalitarian hard line prevails (no dissent, no diversity, no fun) as does the usual movie-villain aesthetic. The shock troops wear basic black with crimson accents, while the leader, played by [John Hurt](#) in a goatee drizzled with spit, parts his hair like Hitler.

The film, which follows Mr. Moore's story in broad outline, updating it with dead-end allusions to Islam, was adapted to the screen by Andy and Larry Wachowski and directed by one of their former assistant directors, [James McTeigue](#) REGISSEUR. (Notably, Mr. Moore is having nothing to do with the film.)

One night after curfew, a young woman, Evey ([Natalie Portman](#), looking and sounding all of 12), is saved from an assault by a man in a Guy Fawkes mask who introduces himself as V ([Hugo Weaving](#), wasted under his costume). V slices and dices Evey's troubles away, topping off his handiwork first by reciting some vacuous verse and then by blowing up the Old Bailey. She's perplexed, but like any impressionable youngster with daddy issues and no money for therapy, she's also interested. One thing leads to another and, V for voilà, a minor league of extraordinary soul mates is born.

Mr. Moore's pretensions to seriousness may be seriously pretentious SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT, but he seeks to elevate the level of conversation that has been inevitably lowered by the screen adaptations of his work. "V for Vendetta" is the worst offender in this regard, largely because the Wachowskis come equipped with their own fancy reading list and set of narrative and ideological imperatives. INTERPRETATIE – POSITIEF/NEGATIEF

Not long after V rescues Evey, she returns the favor, only to end up on the most-wanted list, chased by the police (meaning, for the most part, [Stephen Rea](#)). Far from the prying eyes and ears of state surveillance, V brings Evey back to his digs, a bachelor pad tricked out with movie posters, books, a Francis Bacon painting and [Julie London](#) pleading "Cry Me a River." All that's missing is a shag carpet and Miss July. **SUBTILITEIT**

Despite his kinky getup, V has other things on his mind than ravaging his house guest — like watching the 1934 chestnut "[The Count of Monte Cristo](#)" with Evey while curled up on the couch. Mr. Moore's story owes much to the Dumas (père) novel about a wrongly imprisoned commoner turned wealthy avenger, but it differs significantly in how it puts vengeance and man over forgiveness and God, and more or less jettisons the love angle. Unlike the Count, V remains a lone avenging angel to the big-bang end, which does help give this sluggish affair a much-needed resuscitating jolt. Made mostly on sound stages and computers, with 3-D models doubling for monuments, the film looks and sounds as canned as a Buck Rogers serial, though this weighs in less like a conscious aesthetic strategy than a function of poor technique.

Mr. McTeigue, who probably received some guidance from the Wachowskis (they also served as producers), never manages to make this Goth dystopia pop. Like the last two installments of the "Matrix" cycle, this film sags when it should zip, weighted down with self-importance and some dubious thinking. **COMPLEXITEIT – ENTERTAINMENTWAARDE – VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The Wachowskis appear deeply enamored of the great (super) man theory of history, with mysterioso leaders who are intent on delivering the rest of us from false consciousness. Given this, it's no surprise that the geopolitical terrain staked out in this film skews so last century: globalization having been given the jackboot, partly, one imagines, because multinational capitalism, with its total market value and shareholder wealth, doesn't register as cool as all that shiny, shiny leather and crypto-Nazi styling. **CONTEXT MAATSCHAPPELIJK**

Then again, the idea that revolution can come from the ground up doesn't jibe with the great director theory of film history, either. One of the more interesting things about Mr. Moore's comic, along with V's contradictions and cartoon dialectics ("anarchy wears two faces," V intones), is how many different characters take possession of the story at different times.

The screenplay, by contrast, essentially carves the plot into two parallel narrative strands — V and Evey occupy one, the fascists and their henchmen the other — that eventually twist together as predictably as in any blockbuster blowout. **ORIGINALITEIT**. Working in a medium and at a scale that allows him to conceptualize outside the lines, Mr. Moore wags his finger at

the masses, blaming them for their dire straits, but he also hands much of the story over to them.

Initially scheduled to be released in November 2005, to coincide with Guy Fawkes Day, the film was delayed in the wake of the July bombing attacks in London. Since then, inevitable questions and objections have been raised about whether "V for Vendetta" turns a terrorist into a hero, which is precisely what it does do. Predictably, the filmmakers, actors and media savants have floated the familiar formulation that one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, as if this actually explained anything about how terror and power (never mind movies) work.

The more valid question is how anyone who isn't 14 or under could possibly mistake a corporate bread-and-circus entertainment like this for something subversive. You want radical? Wait for the next [Claire Denis](#) film.

"V for Vendetta" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). Less violent than might be expected, the film includes bloody sword violence, sadistic torture and intimations of pedophilia.

5 offline reviews: 30 days of night

Review 1:

Lovely gothic carnage

By AMY BIANCOLLI Copyright 2007 Houston Chronicle

Oct. 18, 2007, 3:35PM

Every other scene or so, some unbelievable icky-sticky gross-out occurs in *30 Days of Night*. Perhaps it is a decapitation by ax. Perchance it is the sight and sound of a precious girl munching on a corpse. It might feasibly be a little bit of both.

But even as stage blood flows like water, this wicked-mean vampire thriller pushes ahead with effective characters, a fantastic visual schema and a terrifying plot **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – SPANNING/SUSPENS - COMPLEXITEIT**. The whole thing scared the bejesus out of me, whatever a bejesus is; all I know is I haven't got one any longer.

For that I blame the evil noggin of David Slade **REGISSEUR**, the director behind 2005's psycho-twisted stalker flick *Hard Candy*. It's much less graphically violent, but both films leave a filmy residue of horror that's hard to wash off. **VERGELIJKING FILMS** It might never, and frankly, it shouldn't; a truly scary movie should do some permanent damage to the psyche.

Nothing in *30 Days of Night* looks all that groundbreaking **ORIGINALITEIT**. It calls on the usual blood-sucking stand-bys (neck bites, gnashing teeth) and the usual narrative progression of a contemporary slasher film: We enter a contained space with assorted characters who die hideously, one by one, until they dwindle to a handful. In this case the contained space is Barrow, Alaska, where the sun sets and stays there for 30 days of night.

In this fictional town (which bears little resemblance to the real-life Barrow), roads are cut off for the duration. What an irresistible opportunity for a shiplot of itinerant vampires, who sneak in after sundown and prepare to snack for a month undisturbed by daylight. They send a runner ahead of them, a half-bit weirdo (*3:10 to Yuma's* Ben Foster, current and undisputed king of the strange **VERGELIJKING FILMS**) who cuts the town's power and torches everyone's cell phones in a pyre.

There to investigate is Sheriff Eben Oleson (Josh Hartnett), standing on a ridge of snow as he bids farewell to one last dusk. He gets word of more odd doings — vandalism, slain dogs in a kennel. That weirdo from out of town shows up at a diner, demanding a bowl of raw meat: a hamburger of doom. Then an old man's head pops up on a stake, and from that moment on, we're in for a feast of nauseous gothic carnage.

Ah, but it's such lovely nauseous gothic carnage. Two things make it so: Its genesis in Steve Niles' and Ben Templesmith's ashen horror comics; and its cosmetic kinship with F.W. Murnau's expressionistic *Nosferatu*. Slade's vampires all have the pale aspect and curling fingernails of Max Schreck in his signature role **CONTEXT CBA** — giving a classic look to the washed-out, computerized palette of this contemporary nocturne. Like *300* and other graphic-novel adaptations, *30 Days of Night* boasts a stylized claustrophobia that yields some arresting visuals **SUBTILITEIT**: The best, in my book, is an aerial portrait of townsfolk fleeing the undead through snowbound streets stained with blood.

All of this is competently acted — by Hartnett as Eben, Melissa George as his estranged wife and Mark Rendall as his younger brother, Jake **FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT**. The film gets small details just so, from the squeak of boots in the bitter cold to the grungy facial hair that sprouts over 30 days of hiding. These aren't complicated people, this isn't a complicated film, but it messed with my head in a major way. As George's character says of Foster's, "He's just trying to freak us out." Jake replies: "It's working." And how.

Review 2:

30 Days of Night

/// October 19, 2007

Chicago Sun-Times

By Roger Ebert

A gaunt stranger haunts the streets of Barrow, Alaska, warning: "That cold ain't the weather. That's Death approaching." Since Barrow is said to be the northernmost town in America, 300 miles of roadless wilderness from its closest neighbor, and 30 days of continuous sunless night are commencing, I expected someone to reply, "You could have fooled me. I thought it was the weather."

But, yes, it is Death, which is very cold. In "30 Days of Night," Barrow will soon be invaded by vampires, who have apparently trekked across the 300 miles of ice and snow wearing their street clothes. You'd think they could find easier blood to drink in Fairbanks or Anchorage, but sunlight is fatal to vampires, and so the month of perpetual night in Barrow lures them like Canadians to Florida.

Their method of attack is the standard one in creature features. They move with loud whooshes at lightning speed when you can't quite see them, and with ungainly lurches when you can. They are a miserable lot **SUBTILITEIT**. Count Dracula at least had style and a sense of personal destiny; these guys are merely obsessed with their next meal. They don't even speak that elegant Hammer Films English; they talk like a garbled transmission played backward: "Qwe!nt raqulo*gg brop#sith!" The movie, which speaks their language, helpfully provides subtitles. It is intriguing to think of newly converted vampires attending language classes at Berlitz, since I do not think Chomsky's theories of speech apply to the Undead.

But I could go on like this all day -- or night, that is. Something about vampire movies brings out the one-liners in me, unless they are directed by Dreyer, Murnau or Herzog **VERGELIJKING REGISSEURS**. The fact is, David Slade's **REGISSEUR** "30 Days of Night" is a better than average example of the genre, **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF** even if it follows the time-honored pattern of supplying a macho man who gathers a hardy band in hiding while the vampires snuffle about. [Josh Hartnett](#) plays the local sheriff, who teams up with his estranged wife, Stella ([Melissa George](#)), another law enforcer, who missed the last flight out of town. (Planes can't land in Barrow at night. Don't ask me why.) **SERIEUS/INTELLIGENT**

The survivors hide in an attic, plunder a supermarket and scheme and plot to outwit the vampires; this time, at least, there is no crusty old-timer to say he's going to make a run for it, because of the 300 miles of snow, etc. The vampires stalk the frigid streets, led by Marlow ([Danny Huston](#), who is actually quite convincing in the role).

The most interesting aspect of the movie is Barrow itself. Folks are drawn closer together when they live in such extreme circumstances, although how they support themselves is a mystery to me. No mention of drilling for oil, maintaining the pipeline, guarding against missile attacks, hunting whales, carving scrimshaw, etc. They seem to have settled there out of sheer perversity, and I guess they support themselves by selling stuff to one another.

I award the movie two and a half stars because it is well-made, well-photographed and plausibly acted, and is better than it needs to be **SUBTILITEIT**. Its director, David Slade, previously made the stunningly good "[Hard Candy](#)." Although his vampires quickly disable the town generators, there seems to be a full moon for 30 days, bathing the streets in cold light. Otherwise, this would be a radio play. I have pretty much reached my quota for vampire movies, but I shouldn't hold that against this one. If you haven't seen too many, you might like it. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE**

If you are a horror fan, you will love it, and in the interest of equal time for the defense, I close with evocative prose by the critic Undeadmin from his five-dagger (out of five) review on [DreadCentral.com](#): "'30 Days of Night' grabs this hoary monster by the throat, pumps it full of the thick rich blood of life, and shoves it out to greet you, eat you and coat you in glorious mists of red firing from oh-so-many newly exposed arterial sprays."

Review 3:

A Long 'Night' Full of Fright

Friday, October 19, 2007

10/19/07

Desson Thomson

Washington Post

"30 Days of Night" is the kind of gruesome but entertaining survival guide you pray you never have to follow: ENTERTAINMENT how to stop vampires killing you during the darkest days of Alaskan winter.

Hey, it *could* happen. It certainly does in Barrow, Alaska, where vampires come to terrorize the isolated town, as seasonal darkness descends for a loooong month. From a safe distance - - in our own pocket of darkness, as it were -- it's a visceral kick to watch as a group of ever-dwindling survivors, led by young, resolute Sheriff Eben (Josh Hartnett), figures out how to outlast these powerful predators. Until sunlight returns and reduces the nasty suckers to black confetti, it's time to lie low and plan occasional guerrilla attacks.

To survive, these guys -- are you taking notes? -- are going to need a good, sharp ax to sever the invaders' heads. (Forget about guns and bullets; they'll only annoy the vamps.) And as Eben discovers, it's vital to get a good clean cut or you'll be Alaskan sushi in seconds.

Directed by David Slade REGISSEUR ("Hard Candy"), the action scenes are artful and terrifying GEBRUIK HAT – SPANNING/SUSPENS; these killers move so quickly and decisively, there seems to be no hope for humanity. And while Hartnett and Melissa George (as his estranged wife) make functionally appealing characters, the real star of "30 Days" is Danny Huston. As the animalistic leader of the pack, he's as disturbing as he is compelling FOCUS ACTEURS TALENT, a feral creature with all senses at full capacity. If there's an action figure, I'm ordering one.

Review 4:

'30 Days' sucks the fun out of graphic novel

By Michael Phillips

October 17, 2007

Chicago Tribune

In between meals the vampires in "30 Days of Night" converse in a language scrambling together a little Dutch, a little Hebrew and a little Arabic, so that a subtitle reading "We should've come here ages ago" accompanies dialogue that sounds like "Ak-mak poop-dek humuna-humuna-humuna-ptooooey." The film is based on a 2002 graphic novel by Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith CONTEXT CBA, set in Barrow, Alaska, the northernmost burg in the U.S., where a diminishing handful of survivors must fend off the bloodthirsty so-and-sos long enough to see the end of the annual month without sun.

Fast and gory and pretty spectacular in its amalgam of Bram Stoker and "Northern Exposure," the graphic novel is very entertaining ENTERTAINMENT. Slower and gory, director David Slade's REGISSEUR dutiful film version has its moments—including an eerily beautiful gliding overhead perspective of the vampires and their victims and the blood-stained snow—but it feels sluggish and attenuated. It's too bad, because the world could've used a new

collection of vampires, a breed operating at the speed of light with the ferocity of a sales force working entirely on commission, the way "28 Days Later" and especially "28 Weeks Later" reimagined flesh-eating zombies for today's active lifestyle. **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF – VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The script is simple stuff, simpler than the graphic novel **COMPLEXITEIT**, which at least managed to devote a page or two to the vampires' back story. Not here. They just show up, as if their charter bus hit a bad patch of weather and pulled over for repairs somewhere. Josh Hartnett, looking worried every second, plays the sheriff in charge of keeping a generic group of townsfolk alive. (Danny Huston fares best as primo vampiro.) We follow the survivors as they inch their way across town, day by computer-generated-scary-skies day, from an attic to the general store to the police station. When the words "DAY 7" appear on the screen, you can't help but think: Only seven? Twenty-three days to go? Damn.

Director Slade, who did the nicely acted piece of dung "Hard Candy," has some talent, but he's too in love with his individual pictures of slaughter to concern himself with the proper rhythm and velocity of a scene. Nearly two hours long, "30 Days of Night" makes you feel the cold (though it was shot in New Zealand) and feel the fangs, but it also makes you feel like 30 days is a pretty long time.

Review 5:

The Alaskan ghoulish rush

By Ty Burr
10/19/2007
Boston Globe

If you're a vampire, I suppose, finding the right vacation spot can be a pain in the neck. So many variables to consider: an absence of sunlight, hot and cold running blood, beach access. For the undead in "30 Days of Night," the town of Barrow, Alaska, has everything but the latter. Two out of three ain't bad.

Based on a 2001 graphic novel, "30 Days **CONTEXT CBA**" is a proficient, atmospheric fangfest that does nothing you haven't seen before but still does it passably well **SUBTILITEIT**. It'll freak out teenage first-timers sneaking in under the R rating, even if wizened gorehounds who know their vampire-movie history will stick with 1987's "Near Dark," still the final word in postmodern Nosferatus. **VOORSPELLING REACTIE – VERGELIJKING FILMS**

The concept is as elegantly simple as the film's desaturated color scheme. Barrow, the northernmost town in the United States, is plunged into darkness one month each winter,

when the sun dips below the horizon and doesn't come back. The road and the airport are closed; the reduced population hunkers down and waits. For a coven of vampires, Barrow presents an all-you-can-eat buffet.

For the locals, led by Sheriff Eben Oleson (Josh Hartnett, looking more than ever like a fetal Tommy Lee Jones), it's wholesale slaughter followed by 3 1/2 weeks of hide and seek. "30 Days" builds slowly and eerily to an early pitch of cover-your-eyes carnage, as Eben drives around on the last day of sunlight discovering evidence that something is planning entrapment. The sled dogs have been killed; cellphones have been collected and burned. (How? Don't ask.) A wild-eyed drifter (Ben Foster, reprising his "3:10 to Yuma" crazy act as the movie's Renfield) arrives in town muttering dire warnings. **SERIEUS/ INTELIIGENT**

Then night falls and the undead emerge: freakish and dark-eyed, dressed in fashionable black, with rows of dessicated dental work. They speak in shrieky vampiresh and their features don't quite make sense. **SUBTILITEIT** as if drawn by a comics artist who hadn't finished the correspondence course. And they're fast. They pull you under a house and chomp through your carotid before you've even been properly introduced.

So far so ghoulishly good, and the leader of the vampires looks so remarkably like Danny Huston that you realize with a start it is Danny Huston, slumming with playful B-movie nihilism. As the movie settles down and the dark days roll on, "30 Days" becomes a fairly dull 10-little-Alaskans suspense film. **SPANNING/SUSPENS - ORIGINALITEIT** with Eben and the other survivors crawling from house to house, trying to avoid detection.

The group's awfully standard: a raw kid, an old coot, a blowhard chicken, a noble ethnic, an anonymous girl, and Stella (Melissa George), the lissome county fire marshal and Eben's estranged wife. Apparently the undead have their uses in the marriage-counseling department, too.

The director is David Slade **REGISSEUR**, whose previous movie, the controversial low-budget drama "Hard Candy," was in many ways scarier than anything he gets up to here. But "30 Days of Night" is stylish in a doomy, shallow, graphic-novel way, and despite regular dips into gore its better moments are quiet ones **POSITIEF/NEGATIEF**: a lone woman calling for help on Main Street while dark figures move just out of sight on the surrounding rooftops. They've staked her out as bait. If you've never seen a vampire movie before, feel free to bite.