

EDITORIAL

Letter to the Editor:

Dear Editor

I am writing in response to Jason Snyder's column in the January 14th, 2000, edition of the Beacon entitled "Why your server deserves a tip."

I have been waiting tables for four years, and this past summer I did so in Nags Head, North Carolina, one of the busiest vacation spots along the East Coast. If anyone for a second doubts that serving is an easy way for cash, you are sadly mistaken. As this column seems to point out, the server puts up with everyone! And the person who must be 100% satisfied is the person supplying your wages, the guests. Sometimes your work is not worth waiting on the table if the cooks cannot be on time. It is easy to explain to guests that the kitchen is backed up, but they couldn't care less, they only see you, not the line in the kitchen waiting for food to come up, so who suffers? The server, because it is the way the guests can tell you they are pissed, and you get a lousy tip.

I also want to comment on how to

properly tip a server. First off, 15% is mandatory regardless of the restaurant. Only if the service is lousy and you can 100% see that it is the server's fault for the mistakes should you give a 10% tip. Believe me when I say I know when I look at a tip if I have done a good job or not. If I receive 10% I know that the service was not up to expectation. What is not acceptable, contrary to popular belief, is leaving no tip at all.

If I get 10% I know I did bad, which is why it is necessary to leave 15% all the time, so you let the server know that have done what was expected. I leave 20% all the time, but that is because I can fully understand the nature of our work and I want every server to know they are appreciated. I also want to make it known that servers, in most cases, receive very little or no hourly wage at all. This means then they are completely dependent on your tips as guests.

I guess what I want to make perfectly clear is that the next time you

visit a restaurant, look around, you are probably one of ten tables a server is waiting on hand and foot. If for one minute you think you can get away with leaving a lousy tip, forget it because everyone will know you by face. This summer I worked at a very friendly "locals" restaurant. Here if you left a lousy tip, all servers knew about it. The next time you come to visit no server will be happy to have you in his or her section.

My suggestion is to try serving tables. It takes a special type of person to deal with the public and edgy co-workers who are just as pressured as you feel. There are people in this world though, that for some reason just cannot understand how to tip. From experience a quarter is not enough for a \$60.00 bill, even if they were out of what you wanted, it is not our fault, take it up with the manager-Food for thought!

Kristin Rodgers
BIO, 04

National Commentary

Discontent With Hollywood's Old Formulas Is Reinvigorating The Movie Industry

by Philip Wunch
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Welcome to the era of cynical cinema. We applaud its presence, even while pondering how long it will last. Skepticism is the birthright of artists, whether of screen, stage or printed page. And in the 20th century's final year, the force born of discontent energized American film for the first time in 30 years. "American Beauty," "Magnolia," "Cradle Will Rock," "The Insider" and "The Hurricane" reflect the sense of righteous indignation that fueled some of the best American movies of the past. Woody Allen recently told Paris journalists, "In regards to the start of the millennium, I think we'll see the golden age of cinema. Soon directors will learn how to use new technology to create stories, not just for special effects."

The last great golden age of American cinema occurred during the late '60s and early '70s, when national unrest reached a stormy peak unmatched since Civil War days. Political turmoil nurtures creative fury, but Bill Clinton's Zippergate never registered a government fallout similar to Richard Nixon's Watergate. Political disillusionment may be a factor in the current resurgence, but only a minor one.

Disillusionment with formula is a more immediate cause for this winter of discontent. It's a reasonably safe assumption that even the most prosaic filmmaker dreams of startling both audiences and critics. Yet much of the past two decades' filmmaking was keyed to special-effects formulas. Either we were advised to love our alien brethren or kill those drippy creatures from outer space. We were encouraged to either understand terrorists or destroy them. And if older teens, we were told to hurry up and get laid.

As for teens, they would be the first to tell us that cynicism begins with doubting the wisdom of our earliest authority figures. Mom and Dad. The ultimate betrayal is of children by their parents, and it filters through numerous contemporary films. It's a recurring theme in "Magnolia." A brilliant whiz kid is terrorized by his ambitious father. A television celebrity just can't quite remember whether or not he committed incest with his daughter. The face of a dying mogul registers the painful remorse that he cannot articulate to his estranged son.

Incest propels poignant tragedy in "The Cider House Rules" and stark tragedy in "The War Zone." In

"Angela's Ashes," a seemingly affectionate father drinks away every penny that might save his family from starvation. In "Liberty Heights," a loving dad brings shame to his children when his shady business deals become public. "Joe the King's" father is an abusive drunk. The final ray of hope in "American Beauty" lies with two teens who see truth more honestly than their deluded parents. Even in a formulaic star vehicle such as "The General's Daughter" with John Travolta, the plot hinges on the general's betrayal of his daughter. Sorry, all ye mothers and fathers, but you're always the first to be blamed.

Although there's definite irony in big-budget Hollywood movies labeling big business as villains, the worlds of industry and finance are inevitable artistic heavies. "Fight Club's" strongest moments occur when it skews the yuppie tract that we are defined by what we buy. In "The Insider," the tobacco-company culprits stop at nothing, not even thinly veiled death threats, to silence the whistle-blower. The kamikaze football movie "Any Given Sunday" has as its leading female character a fire-breathing dragon lady who owns the team and is interested only in the bottom line.

Cynical cinema is populist moviemaking at its most trenchant, leaving no room for anything resembling an imperialist perspective. In "Cradle Will Rock," government suppresses freedom of artistic expression. "Three Kings" raises questions about our government's policies during the Persian Gulf War. In "The Hurricane," police react out of prejudice rather than a sense of justice. And "The End of the Affair" concludes with the embittered protagonist defying the ultimate authority figure. He pleads with God to just leave him alone.

Sometimes the finger of blame is pointed inward. The principal male characters of "American Beauty" and "The Talented Mr. Ripley" loathe themselves. "American Beauty's" unhappy homeowner finds curious redemption in reaching the lowest plateau, while the titular Mr. Ripley commits murder to become the person he always wanted to be.

"We live in an age where the message to us as individuals is that we are inadequate," "The Talented Mr. Ripley's" director, Anthony Minghella, recently said. "The message is) that we should reinvent ourselves, change ourselves, our nose, hair, wife, shoes, couch,

lifestyle, everything." The ultimate self-reinvention occurs in the piercing "Boys Don't Cry" with tragic results, while "Mr. Ripley's" reinvention also claims its casualties.

Self-loathing leads to hero worship, a dangerous factor in any circumstance, particularly when the worshiped heroes turn out to be anti-heroes. In "Magnolia" and "Fight Club," one-time glamour boys Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, respectively, play power figures revered by acolytes who accept their mantra as gospel. At this passage of time in world history, you might consider either character a "false prophet" without fear of sounding like "Saturday Night Live's" Church Lady.

Celebrity worship is the most glittery extension of hero worship. One of the ironies of the departing century's second half is that the Hollywood studio system, which depended on the popularity of movie stars, waned. Yet movie fandom gave way to celebrity fandom, which embraced practically anyone ever deemed suitable for a People magazine cover. Our fascination with celebrities, our belief that their lives are better than ours, is the glue that holds together the fanciful plot of "Being John Malkovich."

Cynical cinema recognizes that our existence is governed by rules. But its practitioners pride themselves on knowing which rules to break. "The Cider House Rules," a warm-hearted version of John Irving's novel, ends with the realization that the symbolic admonishments posted on the workhouse walls are often useless. "Liberty Heights" ends with Jewish lads defying the "exclusivity" of a country club swimming pool. In "Man on the Moon," Jim Carrey's Andy Kaufman reads "The Great Gatsby" to his audience, violating every rule of showmanship by saying that comedy "doesn't have to be funny."

Doubts, skepticism, cynicism, rebellion. By whatever label, these traits have fostered any era's most supreme artistic achievements. They're with us again, and let's appreciate them while they last. In the shaky Hollywood union of artistry and commerce, a rebellious filmmaker may soon be treated like an unwanted child.

But there's always hope. After hearing that his film received six Golden Globe nominations, "American Beauty" director Sam Mendes told the Los Angeles Times that he hoped to prove that "a story is the only special effect that will never go out of fashion." Long live rebellion.

Bitchin' by Mike Silence is Golden?

Mike Frawley

Well here we go again, but you all should be proud of me, I made it a whole three weeks into the semester before bitchin' this time. But there was something so idiotically stupid that occurred on this campus last week that I just had to comment on it. So what is my topic this week? The week of silence for formal sorority rush.

Now in theory I wouldn't bitch about sorority girls' not talking for a week. As concepts go it's a good one. But since they were only not speaking to non-sorority girls, I was not able to benefit from their enforced silence, all it did was annoy me to no freakin' end.

Now you may wonder why this week of silence was so annoying to me as it should not have directly affected me. Well unfortunately it did. I got to watch a week of stuck up sorority girls walk around and pointedly ignore other girls for no good reason. It even went so far as a sorority girl telling another girl in one of my classes that she couldn't answer her question about the class. Uh...wanna run that by me again? Not talking to people in class about something dealing with class? So what is the point of going to college?

I thought that it was for getting an education, but I guess that I was wrong.

I talked to people in various sororities about why they did this archaic ritual. I promised to leave out their names so that they won't be shunned for life for talking to me (as far as I can figure the Greeks consider me to be the anti-Christ). But from what I was told, the concept behind the week of silence was to let women decide about what sorority to join without being influenced by speaking to a sorority member. Why are certain sororities so paranoid about this? Is it really that big of a problem? Do sororities routinely stab each other in the back to get new members?

You are allowed to talk to them in an academic setting about academics but that was it (apparently the girl in my class decided to take it to another level, it's nice to see insanity taken to a whole new level, if you are going to do something stupid you might as well take it to an extreme). But every single Greek that I talked to thought that the idea was damn stupid, but for some reason they do it year after year. And while all I can do is bitch, Greeks can take a stand

and get this changed!

Individual sororities are not allowed to decide if they want to participate in this week of silence. Pan-Hellenic Council sets and enforces the rules for formal rush, and if sororities want to participate in formal rush they have to agree with the rules set by PHC.

PHC needs to get their heads out of the sand and rethink this insane policy. What groups on Earth still have rules of silence besides some cult wackos in Montana? Jonestown did not have laws this strict, all they had was a cool new flavor of Kool-Aid.

I know that right now there are a whole bunch of people getting ready to run to their computers to write me a nasty letter saying that this is their tradition, and I know nothing about it and that I have no right to pass judgement. Well when I see it going on around me I have full right to pass judgement, and please don't trot out that damn "tradition" argument again. A hundred years ago women were expected to never speak their mind, wanna keep that tradition going? Oh wait, you are.



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