WEB-BASED AMATEUR CRITICAL REVIEWS IN COMPARISON TO TRADITIONAL TELEVISION COUNTERPARTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Since 1907 film criticism has been a part of the mass media. In the 1970s film criticism made a leap from the pages of the local newspaper to television programming in the form of *Sneak Previews* hosted by Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert. Reaching a peak in ratings by 1992, the show was regularly being viewed by millions. In recent years as programming has moved from the television to the internet as a result of the digital revolution, a new breed of reporters have attempted to fill the shoes that critics like Siskel & Ebert left behind.

This study analyzed one specific web based film criticism program, *Half in the Bag*, and compared the content recently presented by that program to 1992 episodes of *Siskel and Ebert.* Data was gathered in from both sources for the total length spent reviewing the film, the focus on opinion, the use of film terminology and the overall likelihood of critics to recommend a film. The goal of the study was to ultimately determine if content provided by modern day web based film critics is truly comparable to the works completed by Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert in the early 1990s.

Research indicated that while appearing like their traditional counterparts, in many ways they were not comparable. Thus, while the overall trend seems to be leading to a convergence of the internet and television, and a movement of programing from the television to the web, web based film review programs like *Half in the Bag* are not presenting the same content that previous television reviewers did, but rather a new form of film review that focuses on analysis and a specific niche audience.

Introduction

Since the dawn of cinema, film reviewers have played a role in how the public chooses which films to see (Musser, 1991, p. 362). Traditionally, these critics reached their audiences through the mass media in the form of newspaper columns and television segments discussing the merits, or lack thereof, when looking at a particular film. Furthermore, professional journalists who reported to an editor or executive producer who helped shape the messages predominantly wrote these reviews.

However, over the course of the last decade, websites such as YouTube.com and Blip.tv have given a whole new group of individuals a chance to share their insights into and opinions on filmmaking and Hollywood releases with the world. These people, referred to by some journalists as "amateur fan boys" (Taylor, 2011), are often little more than average moviegoers with a camcorder and an Internet connection. Their popularity, however, is worth noting as some web-based reviewers have garnered upward of 3,000,000 views per month and close to $1,000,000 in revenue annually (Stelter, 2011), at the same time traditional journalism-based critics have seen declines in ratings and seem to be leaving the airwaves (Rousseau, 2008).

When looking at this new form of online reviewer from a scholarly standpoint, the researcher was interested in discovering how amateur web-based film reviewers and their reviews of films compared to the film reviewers of the past in traditional media such as television. The goal of this comparison was to discover whether this new breed of film reviewer was unique to the Internet or just the continuation of traditional counterparts in a new medium.

The researcher began by looking at the history of film criticism and review, with the goal of establishing an understanding of the trade of film review from its roots through to today. Once the history of the medium was explored, the focus moved to understanding previous research

conducted on the subject of film review. Previous research focused on two areas of film review: the value of critical review in assessing a film's value to the movie-going public (Koh, Hu, & Clemens, 2010) and the value of film review as a medium of prediction or influence over potential box office revenue (Basuroy, Chatterjee, & Ravid, 2003; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Reinstein, 2005; Yong, 2006).

With previous scholarship in mind, the researcher constructed a study that would analyze four facets of film review: length of presentation, amount of opinion expressed, amount of discussion concerning the craft of filmmaking, and likelihood of panning a film. These factors were chosen in order to best compare modern web-based reviewers to their traditional television counterparts. A theoretical framework was established with the uses and gratification approach (Rosengren, 1974), agenda-setting theory, and framing theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) as guideposts.

Rationale

The rationale for selecting web-based amateur film critics as a subject for study was primarily their growing popularity (Stelter, 2011) in comparison to their traditional counterparts' waning popularity (Rousseau, 2008). Furthermore, although the Internet as a medium has been extensively examined by scholars as a new form of communication and a potential replacement for television (Coffey & Stipp, 1997; Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012; McRae, 2006), this subgenre of the web has not been thoroughly examined. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no scholarly journal has published a study examining the videos produced by web-based film reviewers.

Additionally, the large number of views that these web video reviewers have garnered on a regular basis also played important role in their selection as a subject for study. Some web-

based reviewers now receive an average of 3,000,000 views per month and close to $1,000,000 in revenue annually (Stelter, 2011). These levels of viewership and revenue are quite significant, as they put these web-based reviewers in a league on par with many of their television counterparts at their height during the 1990s (Rousseau, 2008).

Studies concerning the rise of the Internet as the primary source for entertainment in the American home and the correlated fall of television's place in that role (Coffey & Stipp, 1997; McRae, 2006; Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012) may have provided insight into the cause and pathology of the success of web-based film reviewers but did not clarify whether what was presented by these web-based film reviewers was comparable to their traditional television counterparts. Although film reviewers seem to have moved from the television screens to a new home on the Internet, no conclusions can be drawn without empirical data.

Furthermore, multiple studies have pointed to the power of film critics to influence box office revenue and the success of a film's run in theaters (Basuroy et al., 2003; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Reinstein, 2005; Yong, 2006). With a growing percentage of the public obtaining their information from web-based sources in comparison to more traditional mediums (Coffey & Stipp, 1997; Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012; McRae, 2006), the potential marketing value of these web-based film reviewers is apparent. Therefore, the researcher determined that web-based amateur critics were an important subsection of the emerging social media trends that had yet to be addressed by academia, and thus required analysis.

For the purposes of clarity in this study, the term *reviewer(s)* is defined as the person(s) conducting and presenting the film review and is used interchangeably with the terms *critic* and *contributor*. When the assessment itself is referred to, the term *review* is used and defined as the

presentation of the assessment and is considered synonymous with the terms *film review*, *cinema review*, and *movie review* for the purposes of this study.

Literature Review

A History of Film Criticism

Film criticism has existed as long as film as an art form has existed. When Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* was released by Thomas Edison, the newly created publication *Variety* provided an editorial about the film that scholars consider the first true film review (Musser, 1991, p. 362).

Although newspapers had previously published accounts of Edison's kinescopes as early as 1896 (Bywater & Sobchack, 1989, p. 6), *The Great Train Robbery* was the first film with a full narrative, the first western, and the first heist film. Porter employed never-before-seen effects such as double exposures, cross cutting, and hand-colored film prints (Musser, 1991, p. 264). Furthermore, this film ended with Justus D. Barnes, the leader of the film's gang of outlaws, taking aim and firing point-blank at the audience. *Variety* took notice of the film and published the first film review on January 19, 1907, nearly 5 years after *The Great Train Robbery* premiered (Roberts, 2010, p. 21).

Variety (1907) called the film "a long and interesting moving picture" and said, "The series is so melodramatic in treatment that it acted on the audience like a vivid play." In essence, *Variety* gave the world's first real film the world's first positive film review. *Variety* reviewed another film in this issue—the 1906 French film *An Exciting Honeymoon* (Musser, 1991, p. 362). All prints of *An Exciting Honeymoon* were lost to history some time ago, but the film holds a place in history as the first foreign film ever reviewed in an American publication (Musser, 1991, p. 362).

Establishing Journalistic Legitimacy

From January 19, 1907, onward, film reviews became a mainstay of newspapers, and for much of the time since then, newspapers were where American moviegoers primarily received information about films (Roberts, 2010, p. 26). As the length of films increased, an increased emphasis was placed on story and pacing as well as character development. By the middle of the 1920s, films were beginning to be considered a true art form (Bywater& Sobchack, 1989, p. 7).

One of the first film critics who was truly outspoken about considering film as an art form was Frank E. Woods, who wrote for *The New York Dramatic Mirror* under the pseudonym "The Spectator." Woods began his career as a viewer focusing on the limitations of the format but soon was writing about the aesthetic and structural components of the medium of film (Bywater& Sobchack, 1989, p. 7; Frey, 2015, p. 39).

As America entered the 1930s, sound became a mainstream addition to film. Although many newspaper-based film reviewers were skeptical about the benefits sound would bring to the art form of film, films such as *Frankenstein* (1931) and *King Kong* (1933) helped encourage the use of sound in film, and by the middle of the decade, critics and the masses had embraced the new technology (Bywater& Sobchack, 1989, p. 8). The 1930s ended with the Victor Fleming epics *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of OZ* gaining popularity and critical acclaim (Nugent, 1939; TCM, 2015), solidifying film as an art form as well as the film reviewer's place as an institution in the world of newspaper journalism (Bywater& Sobchack, 1989, p. 9; Frey, 2015, p. 59).

After World War II and throughout the 1950s, newspaper-based film criticism as a journalistic field continued to gain legitimacy, expanding with Hollywood and reaching what some have called "the golden age of film criticism" (Frey, 2015, p. 103; Lopate, 2006, p. ix).

Critics such as Stanley Kauffman and Andrew Sarris, who were academics as in addition to being journalists, published reviews, which increased the legitimacy of film reviews (Lopate, 2006, pp. 286–288, 297–298). However, with the coming of a new generation of moviegoers who grew up in the 1960s, and television becoming a standard piece of furniture in American households, the television medium was ready to take its place as the primary home to America's most famous film critics.

The Transition to Television

Although film reviews were sometimes included as part of local newscasts and even existed as standalone programs, film critics did not fully make their mark on television until the 1970s. On January 15, 1973, Gene Shalit became the *Today Show*'s in-house film and book critic, becoming one of the first nationally recognized television film critics (Frey, 2015, p. 104; Roberts, 2010, p. 255). Soon after, in 1975, a mismatched pair of Chicago film critics, Gene Siskel of the *Chicago Tribune* and Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun Times*, made their initial appearance on local PBS affiliate WTTW (Bywater & Sobchack, 2015, p. 17; Roberts, 2010, p. 270), forming a collaboration that would last for nearly 25 years.

Premiering on WTTW in November 1975, *Opening Soon… at a Theater Near You* (sic) garnered attention, and soon, the show was syndicated nationally, quickly becoming the highest-rated program on PBS (Frey, 2015, p. 123; Roberts, 2010, p. 271). Re-titled *Sneak Previews* in syndication, the show turned Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert into nationally recognized film critics, earning them appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman*, among other programs (Roberts, 2010, p. 302). In 1982, the duo left WTTW to form a new program with Tribune Entertainment called *At the Movies* (Roberts, 2010, p. 271). However, after 4 years, the duo left the show to

pursue a new program with Buena Vista Television, a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company (Roberts, 2010, p. 271).

Siskel and Ebert premiered in syndication on September 13, 1986, and was quickly a ratings success (Roberts, 2010, p. 281). Now competing with both of their previous programs, by 1987 *Siskel and Ebert* was topping WTTW's *Sneak Previews* and Tribune Entertainment's *At the Movies*, with a 2.6 ratings share (Wilson, 1987). The duo continued to collaborate on the program until 1999, when Gene Siskel died of a brain tumor (Roberts, 2010, p. 288).

The Decline of the Film Critic

At the dawn of the 21st century, the ratings of the newly renamed *Roger Ebert at the Movies* had begun to decline. In 1987, the program drew an average of 2.3 million viewers weekly; by 1992, at the show's peak, the show was being viewed by 3.8 million weekly, but by 2002, the program garnered only 2.8 million viewers. In 2008, the program attracted an audience of only 2.4 million weekly (Rousseau, 2008).

Additionally, reincarnations of Siskel and Ebert's previous programs had been canceled by 1996 (WTTW's *Sneak Previews* in 1996 and Tribune Entertainment's *At the Movies* in 1990; Roberts, 2010, p. 296). The increasing use of the Internet and cable or satellite television may have played a role in this decrease in ratings, as did Roger Ebert's declining health and then absence, but some experts pointed to other factors as the cause.

Markiewicz (2001) pointed to the changing demographics of moviegoers as the cause of the decline and observed that a new generation of "self-anointed internet critics and self-absorbed television movie critics" left no place for serious newspaper film criticism. Markiewicz explained that "today's movie critics can do little to keep the masses from insipid fare" but stated that serious newspaper critics still had a place providing insight into the occasional art house film

(Markiewicz, 2001, p. 66). Markiewicz was not the only scholar to point out a decline in the quality and popularity of film reviews as a mainstay of the daily newspaper and on television. Nowell-Smith (2008) provided insight into the rise and fall of film criticism as well.

Nowell-Smith argued that the decline was due to an overgeneralization and general focus on "ordinary films" over the unusual, as these films tend to be easier to package and describe to the public. Nowell-Smith (2008) also observed that "coverage of cinema in the press has reverted to a mixture of snap judgment reviewing and celebrity gossip . . . there is little space for film criticism."

The Decline of Television

The decline in ratings for programs like *Siskel and Ebert* and moviegoers' increased desire to use television programs as sources of information were not necessarily the result of a decrease in the quality of these reviews as Markiewicz (2001) and Nowell-Smith (2008) observed. Additionally, this decline was not necessarily the result of a public being turned off by bickering critics. Several researchers concluded that television as a whole was slowly being replaced by the Internet and computers, and as a result, television film critics may have just followed the trend.

Early research. Researchers have pointed to the growing use of computers and the Internet as the culprit for the ratings decline since the late 1990s. Coffey and Stipp (1997) examined the interaction between computer and television use. Contemporary predictions had pointed to the Internet as a possible competitor to television as a source of entertainment and information in the home (Gilder, 1994; Negroponte, 1995). Looking at 10,076 households and their computer and television use, Coffey and Stipp measured personal computer activity using information from the NPD Group, Inc., an American market research company.

Results of the study indicated contemporary predictions of the day were likely incorrect, and Internet and personal computer use did not have an effect on television viewership (Coffey & Stipp, 1997). Furthermore, results indicated that television viewership and the content provided by television had a large effect on how personal computers and the Internet were used in the home. The researchers suggested that reports of television's eminent demise should be dismissed but also suggested that how the personal computer and television interact in the future should be studied (Coffey & Stipp, 1997).

Turner (1999) used Coffey and Stipp's 1997 study to expand and reexamine what was happening between television and the Internet. Focusing on sports coverage, Turner (1999) explored the then-growing trend of using the television as a computer (specifically, the now defunct WebTV), and the use of the Internet as a medium for netcasting (now called "streaming" or "webcasting"), to explore possible applications and market value.

Results of the study showed that contrary to Coffey and Stipp's (1997) conclusion, technology was likely to converge the computer and television together into a hybrid receiver, to coexist with differentiated purposes. Turner (1999) admitted that how the two technologies would converge or evolve was not yet known, but sports administrators should prepare for an oncoming change of some sort, "through traditional avenues or in ways in which the computer will replace, enhance, or support this telecast."

Predictions become reality. By the middle of the 2000s, it had become more apparent how television and the Internet would interact. McRae (2006) suggested that the death of television was occurring or had occurred already. Compiling a number of previous studies and analyzing their results in tandem, McRae concluded that television had become an outdated

technology, lacked the ability for interaction, and served as a simplistic method for communicating with the masses in comparison to the Internet (McRae, 2006).

McRae (2006) also pointed to multiple studies that indicated television was struggling to compete with the new medium (Cole et al., 2004; Steeves, 2005). Additionally, Nielsen Media Research (2003) seemed to show increasing use of the Internet at the expense of time spent watching television. Concluding that the new medium was likely to continue growing at "breakneck speeds," McRae pointed to a number of factors applicable to the new medium's success, with importance on the changing desires of viewers in what they expected from a media source (McRae, 2006).

McRae argued that new media consumers were interested in four major factors when viewing content that they had not been interested in with previous mediums. The first was a desire to control entertainment. McRae suggested that people wanted "television to be at the service of its users." Pointing to studies that indicated viewers were increasingly changing channels, multitasking, and searching for more desirable programming (Knowledge Networks, 2004), McRae proposed that the web was better suited for this type of viewing experience.

Second, McRae pointed to the audience's desire for interactive entertainment as an important factor for the change from one medium to another, with the Internet much better suited for such interactivity. Third, McRae selected audience's desire for community as an important factor, highlighting the importance of one study that indicated as much as 90.4% of time spent on the Internet was used to e-mail or instant message others (Cole et al., 2004).

Finally, McRae pointed to audience desire for truth as a factor. Truth was not necessarily defined as absolute truth but instead "immediate (on-demand) access to information that can potentially answer a query or provide some sense of truth." Simply put, McRae's definition of

truth points to the Internet's encyclopedic advantages in answering questions posed by viewers about its content.

The web as television reimagined. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it became apparent that television would be ending its traditional role as the primary source of entertainment in the American household. With the ability of utilizing hindsight as the World Wide Web entered its third decade of existence, researchers could finally look for significant trends concerning Internet use and the effect on television.

Liebowitz and Zentner (2012) conducted a study to find trends associated with the impact of the Internet on American television viewership and looked at trends that began before the launch of the World Wide Web through 2011. The researchers used marketing data on television viewing, Internet penetration, and socioeconomic variables for a number of American cities. The results showed that the effect of the Internet on television viewership was not universal but was largely age dependent. Research indicated that although younger media consumers were more likely to use the Internet over television, their older counterparts had not changed their viewing habits greatly since the advent of the World Wide Web. However, the researchers pointed out that Internet use was likely to increase among older Americans as they became more aware of the entertainment abilities of the Internet platform or as they were replaced by previous generations of Internet users who had been exposed to the technology for a larger portion of their lives (Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012).

Since 2011, use of online video streaming services has increased greatly in American households. Among these services are Netflix, Hulu, HBO Now, Crackle, and Sling TV. Market research has shown that these services have continued to permeate the viewing habits of television and movie viewers. In the third quarter of 2015, 18.3% of U.S. online households were

without cable television or satellite service of any kind. This figure had increased by 4% from the third quarter of 2014, when it had been 14.1% (Seitz, 2015). One market research study showed that between April and June 2015, more than 600,000 subscribers cancelled their cable television or satellite services (Snider, 2015).

The cause of the decline in television viewership among younger demographics has been explored by many researchers (Schneider, 2000; Staff, 1996). However, one researcher pointed to the outdated television business model as a major contributor. Christian (2012) explored major networks' programming in the transition from television to the web. Christian focused on the history of episodic web programming and the desire of major networks to provide content on the web, and concluded that attempts by networks to retain traditional television programming structures with web content were a contributing factor in the network's lack of success in driving viewership on the web (Christian, 2012).

These structures included factors such as extended run times and the inclusion of commercial breaks within the programs. Christian contended that using these factors had a positive effect on web series viewership, highlighting web series' advantages over traditional programming. Christian concluded that new media executives were trying to find a happy median between emulating traditional programming and differentiating themselves from traditional programming (Christian, 2012).

Because of the declining use of television as a medium for information (Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012; McRae, 2006), as well as an apparent decline in the quality of television film reviews and the absence of once-famous critics (Markiewicz, 2001; Nowell-Smith, 2008), indicators suggested that film criticism would continue to remain absent from our televisions, at least at the level of saturation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, with film reviewers'

absence from the airwaves, an opportunity was provided for amateur web reviewers to fill the outdated shoes, and many viewers have taken to the web for assistance in deciding which films to view (Stelter, 2011).

The Rebirth of the Film Critic on the Web

Amateur film reviewers have been a growing trend since the launch of YouTube.com in 2005. Using film clips to elaborate their points under the guise of fair use, some web reviewers soon became some of the most subscribed to on the site (Daley, 2009). However, when YouTube.com began implementing stricter policies pertaining to copyright law, many of these popular reviewers had to find new homes on the web for their reviews (Stelter, 2011).

In the aftermath of the YouTube.com policy change, exiled YouTube.com partners took to the site Blip.tv. With its much more liberal policies concerning fair use of film footage and increased ad revenue, Blip.tv soon became home to many of the Internet's popular web reviewers (Stelter, 2011).

One Blip.tv reviewer, Doug Walker, garnered media attention in 2009 when it was announced that his web series *The Nostalgia Critic* was attracting 100,000 to 200,000 views per week, with total advertising revenue exceeding $200,000 annually (Spirrison, 2009). Blip.tv's 50/50 split policy for ad revenue meant that Walker was making more than $100,000 for his efforts (Graham, 2009). In a sense, the technology of the Internet opened up a new opportunity for producers like Walker, who likely would have never made it to air via traditional television broadcasting.

Although some scholars have argued that film criticism has been turned into a "mixture of snap judgment reviewing and celebrity gossip" (Nowell-Smith, 2008), others see the exponential growth in technology and the number of reviewers available as somewhat of a

positive. Journalist Charles Taylor wrote in 2011 about the problems of film criticism in the modern era and argued that traditional film critics are now at odds with web enthusiasts. Having worked first as a newspaper film critic and then as a web-based film critic, Taylor (2011) conveyed the transition as one of increased integration with his audience. According to Taylor, "Within a month (as a web-based reviewer), I heard from more readers than I had in a decade as a print critic."

Concerning American film itself, Taylor pointed to a decline in quality, and an increased focus on marketing as the core cause of the movie-going public's move away from viewing Academy Award winners, which he considered to be a "part of the niche market, no longer expected to attract the big audiences." It is this trend that Taylor pointed to as the major problem that caused the role of the film critic to be altered in the public's eye.

Taylor (2011) argued that web reviewers are not free from the confines of the corporate environment. Taylor explained that due to demand from now interactive audiences, many reviewers were forced into reviewing items in which they otherwise would have little interest. Furthermore, Taylor explained that two major problems exist with web-based film reviews. The first was an overemphasis on the craft of filmmaking instead of how the film connects to life and an overabundance of web-based film reviews. However, Taylor argued that these negatives were not a result of the web-based film reviewer's desires but the increased demand by their audiences for such content.

Yielding to the demands of web reviewers' audiences can be quite effective, however, as Milwaukee producer Mike Stoklasa of Red Letter Media discovered after uploading his 70-min review of *Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace*. As of January 2015, part one of his 70-min review had received almost 6,000,000 views and was available in three dimensions (3D;

Stoklasa, 2012). The success of this and subsequent reviews by Stoklasa led to him being named as one of *Filmmaker* magazine's "25 New Faces" in 2010 ("25 Faces of 2010", 2010).

Deciding to focus on more contemporary fare, Stoklasa teamed up with fellow producer Jay Bauman in 2010 to launch a new series on Blip.tv, *Half in the Bag*. Structured similarly to the format of *Siskel and Ebert*, the show has been the primary series produced by Red Letter Media since 2010 (Adler, 2011). As of November 15, 2012, *Half in the Bag* was Blip.tv's most popular contemporary film review series (Blip.tv, 2012). In addition, the website RedLetterMedia.com has more than 100,000 unique visitors per month (*Complete*, 2015).

The Value of Critical Reviews

Once an understanding of the history of film criticism was established, and the factors contributing to the transition of criticism from television to the web understood, the next step was to explore what value online film criticism held in actually assessing movies. Multiple studies have been conducted on film criticism's perceived value (Koh et al., 2010; Zhuang, Jing, & Zhu, 2006). One study in particular focused on the perceived quality of online movie reviews and how those reviews reflected a product's perceived quality.

Koh et al. (2010) recorded the average of more than 1,000 online film ratings on the websites IMDB.com (Internet Movie Data Base) and Douban.com and compared the ratings given by Americans to those given by Chinese reviewers. Koh et al. also analyzed cultural factors to see whether they played a role in the rating of movies on the Internet (Koh et al., 2010). One of the most interesting outcomes of this study was that it showed most scores on IMDB.com were either extremely high (10/10) or extremely low (1/10) (Koh et al., 2010). This was contrary to what researchers expected, as prior studies (Poulton, 1989; Tourangeau, Rips, & Raskinski, 2000) had shown that results of ranked ordinal surveys tend to avoid extremes.

Labeled by some researchers as responsive contraction bias (Poulton, 1989), this tendency to avoid extremes seemed to be absent in film reviewing. This tendency of extreme ranking was less prevalent among Chinese reviewers than among American reviewers (Koh et al., 2010).

To test whether this phenomenon was online only, Koh et al. compared movie reviews posted online with those from an experimental study and found that a bias existed on the web. Additionally, results indicated that this trend was more prevalent among American reviewers than Chinese reviewers. Koh et al. pointed to the collectivist nature of Asian cultures as a possible factor in this difference between American and Chinese reviewers.

Thus, the rating of a film online is not necessarily an indicator of whether the film is actually well received. American film distributors may overestimate or underestimate a film's popularity and potential box office revenue by utilizing an American online reviewer's opinion (Koh et al., 2010). Furthermore, when approaching web-based film reviewers, it was important to keep this factor in mind, as extreme reviews may be commonplace in web series as well.

Film Criticism as a Two-Way Medium

Taylor (2011) pointed out that the need to attract an audience puts pressure on reviewers, especially web reviewers, to review certain films. To better understand how the audience–reviewer relationship is conducted, it was important to look at communication on the web and how it differs from the communication on television.

When looking at web-based film reviews in comparison to their traditional counterparts, the Internet has the ability to be a two-way medium, different from television, which is primarily a one-way medium. Television uses what Shannon and Weaver (1949) called the mathematical model (Figure 1). In this model, an information source (the film reviewer) sends a message (the

film review) to the transmitter through a channel to the receiver, which decodes the message and delivers it to its destination (the television viewer; Shannon & Weaver, 1949).

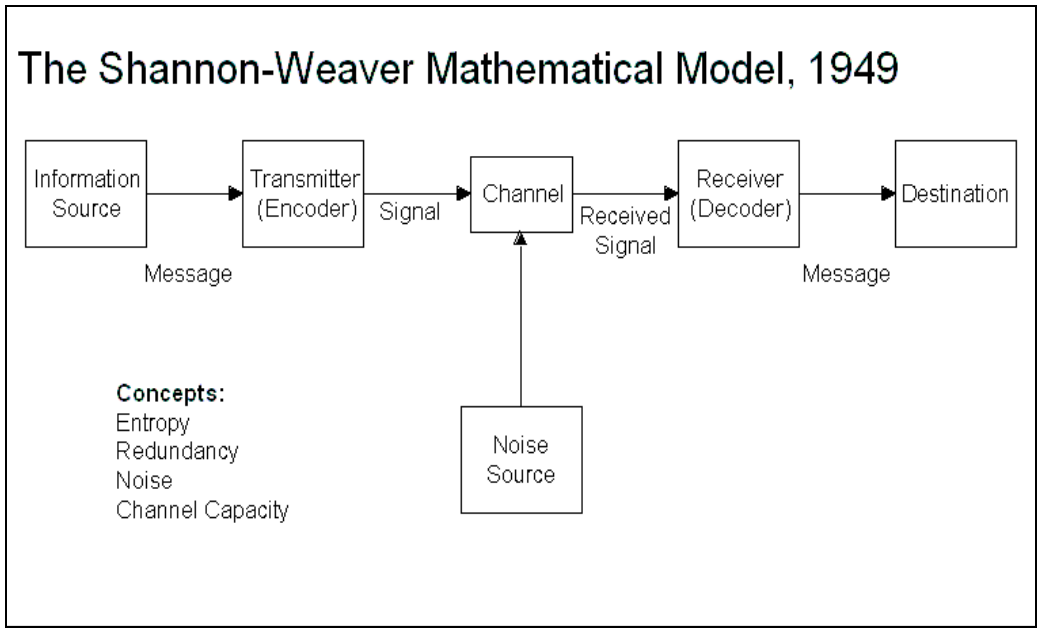

Figure 1. The Shannon-Weaver mathematical model of communication, used to illustrate one-way communication through radio or television.

Traditional television film critics such as Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert communicated to their audiences largely in this way, as viewers had no recourse to communicate back with the critics, except perhaps via phone calls to the station or letters to the reviewers. Web-based film critics, however, exist in a world that is intensifying with a more interactive model, with comments, e-mail, live chat, and other communication tools at their disposal to keep in touch with their audience. In this sense, web-based reviewers' communication with their audience more closely resembles Schramm's (1954) interactive model of communication.

In Schramm's model (Figure 2), the sender and the receiver are interpreters, encoding and decoding messages to and from one another (Schramm, 1954). Applying this model to web-based film reviewers and their audience, the reviewer (interpreter A) would encode a message

(the review) and send it to be decoded by the viewer (interpreter B). The viewer could then respond by encoding a message back to the reviewer in the form of a comment on his or her website, video, or through e-mail. The reviewer could then respond with another message to the viewer, and so on.

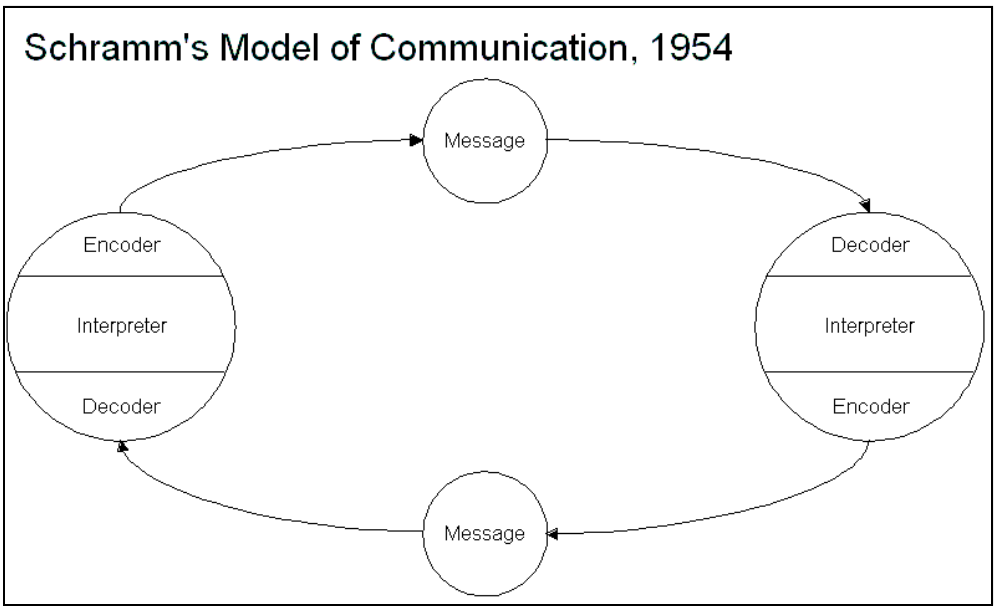

Figure 2. Schramm's interactive model of communication, used to illustrate two-way communication through the Internet.

This type of communication model has the potential to be a blessing and a burden to web-based film reviewers, as they can clarify their points and receive criticism directly from their audiences (Taylor, 2010). Researchers have investigated how film reviews on the web and web video itself, as well as the power of word of mouth, affect audience opinion and box office reception.

Yong (2006) studied the use of word-of-mouth information to analyze what patterns existed and how word of mouth affected the ability to predict box office revenue. Yong collected information from Yahoo Movies message boards (http://movies.yahoo.com), at the time of the

study one of the most popular movie websites (Graser, 2002). Yong then chose films that were nearing release and coded users' posts for valiance (how positive or negative a comment was) and volume (how many comments about a film were posted). Additional data collection was also completed as the film was released and the subsequent weeks after the release.

Results of this study indicated that word-of-mouth activity was highest on the site during the prerelease period of the film's run in theaters and during the film's opening week. Furthermore, the word of mouth tended to be more positive before the film's release and became more critical of the film in the opening week and the weeks following. Results indicated that a higher volume in the number of posts regarding a film during this prerelease period would lead to a bigger box office return during the film's first week in theaters. Interestingly, the valence of the comments by users did not share the predictive ability that volume held.

However, Yong argued that multiple factors suggested that prerelease word of mouth is likely a minimal factor in the formation of a decision by a moviegoer to see a particular film. Yong pointed to the low cost of seeing a film, on average $6 at the time of the study (Motion Picture Association, 2003), as a contributing factor making movie-going an impulse decision for most consumers. Thus, Young implied that most moviegoers may not go through an "intensive decision-making process" requiring word-of-mouth research before viewing a film.

Yong concluded by discussing how multiple factors influence a film's potential box office, such as movie critics, the number of recognizable stars cast in the film, television and radio, multiple websites, and prerelease advertising by the studios, which typically amounts to 50% of the film's budget (Vogel, 2001, p. 96). Thus, although high word-of-mouth volume is an indicator of a film's potential box office, it is likely an aggregate result of these other factors.

Film Criticism as a Marketing Tool

As Yong (2006) pointed out, word of mouth and the interactive nature of the Internet can aid in providing insight into the potential box office returns for a film, but other factors, such as media-based film critics, likely have an effect on an overall increase in revenue. Critics' reviews and their effect on a film's marketability is an area many scholars have explored in research and is an important factor to consider when looking at media-based film critics.

Eliashberg and Shugan (1997) analyzed the possible correlation between film criticism and box office revenues. Results of this study showed that a correlation exists between film critics' reviews and box office revenues, but this correlation is strongest with reviews made later in a film's run, and early reviews are not significantly correlated with potential box office returns.

Thus, researchers concluded that film critics are more likely to act as predictors of box office performance than as opinion leaders and that other factors are responsible for a film's box office returns. Although the researchers could not draw conclusions regarding the cause of this trend, Eliashberg and Shugan (1997) suggested that studios' marketing efforts are likely larger influences on a film's success than are critical reviews.

Building on Eliashberg and Shugan's (1997) research, Basuroy et al. (2003) also examined how film critics' reviews of films affect overall box office performance, as well as how marketing budgets and star power stack up against reviews. Specifically, the researchers studied the power film critics had on influencing the film-watching public to either view or avoid a film. Furthermore, researchers attempted to find out whether film critics are predictors of a film's overall box office potential, or if they serve as predictors and influencers.

Results indicated that positive and negative reviews by film critics correlate with box office revenues. Furthermore, results of this study indicated that over time, additional positive reviews after a film's release by critics contributed to sustained success at the box office, suggesting that media-based film critics not only play a role in predicting a film's box office success but also may influence the public to continue to see the film. This correlation was much stronger with negative reviews of a film during the first week of a theatrical run (Basuroy et al., 2003).

Looking at marketing budgets and star power, researchers found that larger marketing budgets and popular star power aided a film's ability to overcome the effects of negative reviews but were not contributing factors in changing the likelihood of receiving a negative review after the release date. The researchers concluded that studios could enhance box office returns by utilizing marketing to counter negative reviews (Basuroy et al., 2003).

A continuing problem for researchers looking at the correlation between film critics' reviews and box office potential is that many undetectable underlying factors could cause unauthentic results. To overcome these factors, Reinstein (2005) studied Siskel and Ebert's reviews and applied a difference-in-differences approach (Ashenfelter, 1978) that focused on the timing of their reviews in comparison to box office numbers. After the data were purged of potential false positives, results supported previous studies that indicated a correlation between box office revenues and the valence of film critics' reviews of those films, however to a smaller degree than was previously suspected. Results also indicated that certain genres were more susceptible to the effect of this correlation (Reinstein, 2005). For instance, box office revenue for dramas was increased by positive reviews by Siskel and Ebert to a larger extent than were other genres. Furthermore, results indicated that positive reviews by film critics had the strongest

influence on box office potential when the film being reviewed was released in a limited number of cinemas.

Theoretical Framework

Applying previous research, multiple research questions were formulated. Researchers have found that the Internet is beginning to act as a primary entertainment source in American households (Liebowitz & Zentner, 2012). This new medium allows users to upload and access an almost infinite amount of content. This is contrary to traditional television broadcasting, which was dependent on network-allotted time slots and commercial advertising to sustain the production budgets. Keeping this in mind, research question 1 was developed to assess the total amount of time spent discussing a film and whether web reviewers take advantage of their ability to produce reviews that are more in depth.

Research question 1. Do web-based reviewers spend more time discussing a review compared to their traditional counterparts?

Research has also indicated that reviews on the web and on television can play a role in a film's overall box office potential (Basuroy et al., 2003; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Reinstein, 2005), as well as influence how that film is received by the public (Yong, 2006). Previous studies utilized programs such as *Siskel and Ebert* to measure this phenomenon on an opinion-based model (Zhuang et al., 2006). Viewers may tune in to review programs because viewers share similar tastes with the reviewer. Using opinion expression as a variable, research question 2 was developed to test how opinion expression has changed.

Research question 2. Do web-based film reviewers express opinions more often than their traditional counterparts?

Yet another possible reason a viewer might tune into a review program is an interest in film theory and the academic assessment of modern-day cinema. To convey such information to viewers, reviewers must utilize film terminology. Because film reviews have been called a "mixture of snap judgment reviewing and celebrity gossip" (Nowell-Smith, 2008), research question 3 was developed to assess whether web-based film reviewers or their traditional counterparts review films academically or simply share "a mixture of snap judgement reviewing celebrity gossip" (Nowell-Smith, 2008).

Research question 3. Do web-based film reviewers use film terminology more often than their traditional counterparts?

Finally, Markiewicz (2001) argued that self-anointed Internet critics and self-absorbed television movie critics do not have the power to keep the masses from seeing "insipid fare." However, multiple studies have pointed to the power of the critic to influence audience spending at the box office (Basuroy et al., 2003; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Reinstein, 2005). Because of this influence, it is important to assess whether modern web-based film reviewers are more likely to pan a film than their traditional counterparts, leading to the development of research question 4.

Research question 4. Are web-based film reviewers more or less likely to recommend a film in comparison to their traditional counterparts?

Methodology

Sample

In constructing this methodology, the goal was to assess how web-based amateur film critics compared to traditional television reviewers 20 years ago to determine whether these web-based amateurs are truly replacing their traditional counterparts. The reviewers selected as the data source for the traditional film critic portion of this study were Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert from the television program *Siskel and Ebert*. The reviewers selected as a source of data for the web-based amateur film critic portion of this study were Mike Stoklasa and Jay Bauman of the web series *Half in the Bag*.

The episodes of *Siskel and Ebert* analyzed included all episodes with original airdates between May 1, 1992, and September 30, 1992, available on the archiving website siskelandebert.org. The episodes of *Half in the Bag* analyzed included all episodes with original upload dates of May 1, 2012, to September 30, 2012.

Rationale for the time frame of the samples. Because there no longer exists a traditional television-based film review program to compare web-based reviews, it was necessary to select as close a comparative period as possible. The summer season between May 1 and September 30 is traditionally when moviegoers are most likely to attend a showing, and thus more likely to view a film review. The summer season is also the time of year that has similar style films released, essentially summer blockbusters. This trend has not changed greatly in the 20 years since Siskel and Ebert were peaking in the ratings in 1992 (Harris, 2015). Selecting the summer season also ensured that art house film reviews were not being compared to horror films or other unrelated genres.

From the standpoint of collecting data, the summer season also helped keep the data collection at a manageable amount, as coding for four factors on a weekly series can be a tedious and time-intensive process requiring detailed notes for calculations. Because of the researcher's limitations, it was unrealistic to code two full years for four factors.

To establish a comparable time line for traditional counterparts, a time span of 20 years was selected. Traditionally, 20 years is the approximate difference between one generation and another and allowed not only a comparison measured from the 1990s to the 2010s but also for Baby Boomer and Generation X viewers to be compared directly to Millennial viewers, as *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag* are the most popular programs in their respective mediums. Additionally, the even number may have advantages in future studies that utilize the deca-system in calculations. Finally, selecting a similar time of year ensured that Hollywood blockbusters would be the primary films reviewed, and thus, similar films could be compared to one another.

Rationale for selecting the data sources. The program *Siskel and Ebert* was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the source selected to represent traditional film reviewers had to be a television program, as print differs too greatly from web video to be comparable. Furthermore, the program selected as the television source had be a standalone film review program, as segment-based reviews would not have the time available for the discussion of a film. Because multiple standalone film review shows existed in 1992, Nielsen ratings were used to select the most popular reviewers.

Research into the Nielsen ratings of 1992 indicated that *Siskel and Ebert* had more viewers on a weekly basis than any other film review show of the time. Furthermore, many other studies have utilized *Siskel and Ebert* as a standard of measurement when looking at film criticism. Finally, Siskel and Ebert's exposure to the American public was much larger than that

of any of their contemporaries. The duo regularly appeared on *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show*, as well as countless other programs, sharing their picks for best and worst films of the year.

Web-based film critics were primarily selected based on their popularity on the video hosting website Blip.tv. Blip.tv allows users to receive 50% of the profits made from ads placed on their videos, in contrast to sites such as YouTube.com that provide a much smaller percentage of advertising revenue to user partners. Moreover, although YouTube.com has the largest number of hits of any video-sharing website, Blip.tv has fewer restrictions regarding the use of copyrighted material, which has attracted a large number of reviewers to Blip.tv from YouTube.com. As a result of these factors, for-profit reviewers are now absent from YouTube.com except in the form of video bloggers, or "vloggers," whose reviews are often only opinion based and do not utilize video clips.

Blip.tv also requires its users and posters apply for publication on its site instead of allowing all users to produce content. Thus, the profit structure of Blip.tv, as well as its exclusivity, ensured that the web series selected would be commercial, instead of a hobby or pastime for its creators, and thus more similar to the business structure of a traditional television program.

The selected web-based reviewers were Mike Stoklasa and Jay Bauman of *Half in the Bag*. This duo was chosen because their program was the highest-viewed current film review series on Blip.tv's site at the time the study was conducted. Although other web-based film critics received more views on Blip.tv than *Half in the Bag*, those film reviewers focus on "nostalgic" films or presented their reviews in the form of a video blog. Because these formats were not comparable to traditional television counterparts, *Half in the Bag* was selected.

Procedures

Four factors were assessed: the length of presentation, the amount of opinion expressed (valence), the amount of discussion concerning the craft of filmmaking, and the likelihood of a reviewer panning a film. The television program *Siskel and Ebert* and the web-based program *Half in the Bag* were assessed for these factors based on the research questions provided in the literature review.

Length of presentation. When coding for the length of a presentation, the researcher measured the specific amount of time the reviewers spent discussing and reviewing the film during each presentation.

To assess the length of each presentation, individual review runtimes were measured with a stopwatch. Only the time spent presenting a review of the film was included in the measurements, including clips from the film used by reviewers to clarify points. Lengths of presentations were recorded and reported as the number of minutes and seconds.

Time spent introducing the program, discussing things other than the film reviewed, or, in the case of web reviews, time spent presenting comedy skits and continuing teleplay, were not included. Furthermore, time spent presenting advertising sponsor content in the form of commercial breaks were not included or recorded.

Opinion expressed (valence). The second element of film reviews measured was the amount of opinion the reviewers expressed during their reviews. To measure opinion objectively for valence, a method consistent with the models previously used for assessing opinion valence in film reviews was implemented (Basuroy et al., 2003; Eliashberg, Jonker, Sawhney, & Wierenga, 2000; Shugan, 1997; Yong, 2006).

Phrases expressed by each reviewer were independently assigned to one of three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. The messages classified as positive or negative either show clear overall assessment of the movie or provide direct recommendations (Yong, 2006). A message was classified as neutral if it talked about the movie but did not provide positive or negative comments.

Consistent with previous studies that used valence coding (Basuroy, 2003; Eliashberg et al., 2000; Shugan, 1997; Yong, 2006), the valence of the reviews was measured in two dimensions: the percentage of positive messages and the percentage of negative messages. A complete list of the terms collected from *Half in the Bag* and *Siskel and Ebert* used to denote opinion can be found in Appendix B.

Discussion concerning the craft of filmmaking. The amount of discussion concerning the craft of filmmaking was coded in a similar fashion as opinion valence. All episodes of *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag* were viewed to record each instance the reviewers used film terminology. To denote a term as film terminology and establish a standard by which to measure, the counted terms were limited to the list of terms provided to Penn State film students for their Integrated Arts 110 course.

An example of the type of language considered film terminology in this study was the use of the terms *cinematographer* or *mise-en-scene* when conducting reviews. If these terms or others on the Penn State list were used in a review, the instance was recorded. Terms given with opinion, such as "I didn't care for the way the cinematography was executed," were also included in the results. When a reviewer used a term that could have been taken out of context or a term as a homonym of its intended use, the term was not included in the results. An example is the term *location*, which can indicate the place where a particular scene was shot and a

geographic location. In this instance, if a reviewer used the context, “The film utilized some terrific locations,” the term was included in the results, whereas the context “my location in the theater,” was not included in the results. A full list of the terms used to denote the amount of discussion concerning the craft of filmmaking can be found in Appendix A.

Overall recommendation. Finally, in order to assess how *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag* reviewed films, the likelihood of each reviewer to pan a film was recorded. Data were collected by viewing each individual review presented by each program and coding each review as either a recommend, indifferent, or don’t recommend.

Assessment of whether a reviewer recommended or did not recommend a film was straightforward, as both programs had established scoring systems in place for film reviews. In the case of *Siskel and Ebert*, both reviewers gave either a thumbs-up (indication of recommendation) or a thumbs-down (indication of nonrecommendation). In the case of *Half in the Bag*, the reviewers ended their reviews by either directly recommending the film or directly not recommending the film.

If the reviewers did not directly give a recommendation, or if the reviewer expressed indifference or discontent with either recommending or not recommending the film, the reviewer’s response was not included in the results.

Because both programs had two reviewers, it was also necessary to calculate the likelihood to recommend or not recommend a film for each individual reviewer. Thus, each reviewer’s responses were recorded separately, and their coded responses were combined afterward. For instance, if one reviewer recommended a film and the other reviewer did not recommend the film, a score of 0 was recorded. If both reviewers did not recommend the film,

the score was recorded as –1, and if both reviewers recommended the film, the score was recorded as +1.

Findings

Length of Review Discussion (Research Question 1)

Looking first at the results for the length of presentation, the web-based film series *Half in the Bag* included 10 film reviews over the course of seven episodes between May 1, 2012, and September 30, 2012. These programs resulted in a total of 11,226 s (187 min, 6 s) of time spent reviewing films. The mean time *Half in the Bag* spent reviewing a film was 1,122.6 s (18 min, 43 sec) per film. More than half of the episodes featured only one film review.

Comparatively, the length of the presentation results for *Siskel and Ebert* indicated that the program conducted 75 film reviews over the course of 15 episodes between May 1, 1992, and September 30, 1992. Over the course of these 15 episodes, *Siskel and Ebert* presented 7,308 s (121 min, 48 s) of film review. The mean time spent reviewing a film was 208 s (3 min, 29 s) per film. Every episode of *Siskel and Ebert* surveyed featured five film reviews, resulting in a mean review time per episode of 1,040 s (17 min, 20 s).

Results indicated that the web-based reviewers on *Half in the Bag* spent significantly more time reviewing a film than did their traditional television counterparts, with more than a 15-min difference between the two review shows on average. Based on this, research question 1 was supported as the web-based reviewers took advantage of the Internet's lack of time restrictions and provided a longer review.

However, although *Siskel and Ebert* spent less time reviewing each film, the show had an advantage over *Half in the Bag* in some sense, as *Siskel and Ebert* covered nearly five times the number of reviews per episode that *Half in the Bag* reviewed. Looking at the results from this perspective, while research question 1 is still supported, both programs had advantages over the

other. In that regard, the number of reviews per episode compared to the number of minutes spent reviewing a film may be a matter of quantity versus quality.

Opinion Expressed (Research Question 2)

When analyzing the amount of opinion expressed by reviewers, results were recorded for *Half in the Bag* and *Siskel and Ebert* in the positive, negative and neutral, categories. Beginning with *Half in the Bag*, the researcher recorded 175 uses of positive terms when films were reviewed over seven episodes for a mean of 25 positive terms per episode, or 17.5 positive terms per review. Additionally, *Half in the Bag* had 151 uses of negative terms, with a mean of 21.5 negative terms per episode and 15.1 negative terms per review. When coding opinion responses for *Half in the Bag*, the researcher also recorded 88 neutral terms for a mean or 8.8 neutral terms recorded per review, and 13.6 recorded per episode.

Comparatively, when viewing *Siskel and Ebert,* the researcher recorded a total of 255 uses of positive terms over 15 episodes, for a mean of 17 per episode and 3.4 per review. In addition, *Siskel and Ebert* had 285 uses of negative terms, with a mean of 19 per episode and 3.8 per review. When coding opinion responses for *Siskel and Ebert*, the researcher also recorded 113 neutral terms for a mean of 7.5 neutral terms recorded per episode and 1.5 neutral terms recorded per review.

Analyzing the number of times an opinion was expressed on *Siskel and Ebert* over the course of the 15 episodes (653), and dividing by the amount of content in minutes (121.8), research indicated that *Siskel and Ebert* made 5.4 opinionated remarks per minute. Doing the same for *Half in the Bag*'s 414 terms and 187.1 min of content resulted in a calculation of 2.2 opinionated remarks per minute.

When looking at the results for research question 2, it was surprising that the web-based series *Half in the Bag* was less likely to express opinion compared to a traditional program such as *Siskel and Ebert*. The idea that modern Internet-based reviewers, or at least the reviewers on *Half in the Bag,* are not sharing opinion as blatantly as previous research had suggested is an indicator of the need for further research in this area.

Film Terminology Used (Research Question 3)

All episodes of both series were then viewed to record each instance the reviewers used film terminology based on the list of terms provided to Penn State film students for their Integrated Arts 110 course. The researcher recorded that *Half in the Bag* used 149 cinematic terms over the course of seven episodes and 10 reviews for a mean of 21 per episode or 15 per review.

Alternatively, for *Siskel and Ebert*, the researcher found that 105 cinematic terms were used over the course of 15 episodes. The mean number of cinematic terms used by *Siskel and Ebert* per episode was then calculated as 7, or 1.4 per review.

Overall Recommendation (Research Question 4)

Finally, the researcher recorded the overall recommendation given for a film by each reviewer. Results indicated that of the 10 reviews that were conducted by the program *Half in the Bag*, three ended in both reviewers recommending the film, three ended with the reviewers split on whether to recommend the film or not, and four ended in both reviewers panning the film. The mean of these reviews was –0.1, indicating that 55% of the time reviewers panned a film.

Comparatively, for the outcomes of *Siskel and Ebert*'s 35 reviews, the researcher observed that 16 ended with both reviewers giving the film a thumbs-up, seven ended with both

reviewers giving a thumbs-down, and 12 ended with a split decision. The mean of these reviews was +0.26, indicating that 37% of the time the reviewers panned the film.

When the results for research question 4 were analyzed, they indicated that more likely than not web-based film critics panned a film; however, their traditional counterparts were more likely to recommend a film than pan it. The structure of research question 4 did not analyze the possible causes of why web-based reviewers were more likely to pan a film than their traditional counterparts, only whether they are more likely to do so.

Discussion

When the researcher examined the results of this study to answer the question whether modern web-based film reviewers are the reincarnation of their traditional television counterparts, the answer appeared to be no. Although on the surface the review shows, *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag*, are similar, the shows reviewed films very differently. The difference between the two programs is that *Siskel and Ebert* reviewed films, while *Half in the Bag* analyzed films.

Many of the *Siskel and Ebert* reviews were presented in a manner acceptable to the average moviegoer. The reviews generally consisted of a summary of the film's plot along with clips highlighting plot points. The reviewers then discussed content they either liked or disliked and the rationale behind their assessment. *Siskel and Ebert*'s reviews all concluded with a "thumbs-up" or "thumbs-down" affirming or disavowing the perceived enjoyability of the film, with the implication that moviegoers should or should not view the film.

In contrast, many *Half in the Bag* episodes began with an introduction to the genre of the film being analyzed. In some cases, such as when the film was a reboot or a sequel, the episodes began with a focus on the previous films in the series. Similar to *Siskel and Ebert*, *Half in the Bag* provided viewers with a synopsis of the film's plot. However, unlike *Siskel and Ebert*, *Half in the Bag* provided additional plot details in a section of the video focusing on "spoilers," important plot points intended to surprise moviegoers. Once the reviewers concluded their discussion of the plot, they then discussed how the film fit into the genre as well as the actors, directors, and filmmaking techniques used to create the film. The *Half in the Bag* reviewers either recommended the film or not. The recommendations were often less enthusiastic when compared to the recommendations of *Siskel and Ebert*.

The idea that traditional television-based film reviewers reviewed films and modern web-based reviewers analyze films is supported by the results of this study. Results indicated that *Half in the Bag* spent more time reviewing each film than did *Siskel and Ebert* while also reviewing fewer films. This result is not surprising if it is assumed that the focus is to analyze the film. Properly exploring all aspects of the film analysis would require additional time. Additionally, if the reviewer's goal is simply to provide a recommendation, providing a concise plot synopsis and recommendation for the film requires very little time.

Furthermore, results indicated that the web-based film reviewers were less likely to express an opinion in comparison to their television counterparts. Once again, if the reviewer's intention was to assess the film, the reviewer's opinion was less relevant than if the intent was to provide a recommendation.

Finally, the use of film terminology in the results indicated a difference in the purpose of the review. Results indicated that the web-based film reviewers were more likely to use film terminology than their traditional counterparts. This result is not surprising as using film terminology when analyzing a film is essential.

This is only one possible interpretation of the results of this study, which combined quantitative and qualitative research. However, this is the most likely explanation for the correlations found. Additional research is needed. In the interest of comprehensiveness, the researcher also considered further explanations for the results.

Time Limitations

The results showed that web-based film reviewers spent more time discussing each film but reviewed fewer films in total than did their traditional counterparts. These results could be misleading, as bigger is not always better. As William Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*, "Brevity is

the soul of wit." Thus, although *Half in the Bag* spent more time on a film review, the amount of time does not necessarily mean that the review was more thorough.

A *Siskel and Ebert* review could have discussed in 3 min what *Half in the Bag* discussed in 20 min. This point becomes more salient when we consider that *Half in the Bag* and *Siskel and Ebert* mainly covered blockbuster films such as *Batman Returns* and *The Dark Knight Rises*, instead of art house films that require an analysis of the tone, character motivation, and overall scene composition. Although even action blockbuster films like *Batman Returns* require careful consideration when analyzing these elements, there is less emphasis on these aspects.

The Iron Triangle

Although producing a web-based series has advantages, there are also limitations. For instance, an independent company that produces a web series for the Internet can post a video of almost limitless length to the Internet with very few resources. However, to maintain the quality level required for professionalism in modern web broadcasting, content creators must follow the traditional production order of pre-production, production, and post-production.

Although modern web-based video content producers have limited resources in comparison to their traditional counterparts, audiences still expect web-based producers to provide high production values. Although this level is easier to accomplish with modern equipment, it requires a significant amount of the producer's time. This balancing act is called the "project management triangle," otherwise known as the iron triangle (Figure 3).

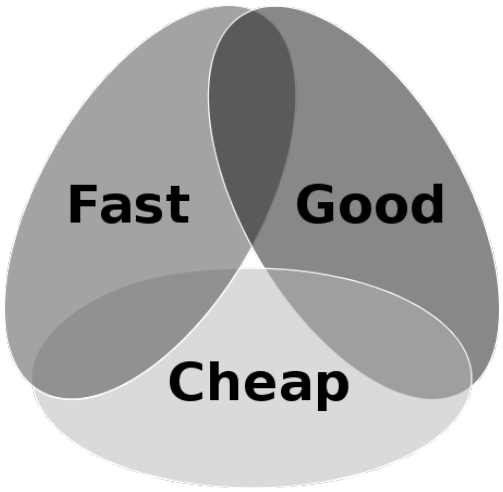

Figure 3. The iron triangle as an Euler diagram.

Similar to their traditional counterparts, web-based content creators must follow the "pick two" philosophy of the project management triangle (iron triangle). The project management triangle limits a project to two of three factors, scope (quality), schedule (speed), and cost (Lane, 2014). For example, a project with a large scope quickly costs more money to produce, a project done cheaply and quickly lacks quality, and high quality that is affordable takes longer to produce. Maintaining a certain level of quality at a low production cost forces web-based content creators to extend their production turnaround time to compensate.

This is contrary to the production of a traditional television programs. A larger budget means that crew specialists such as lighting experts, directors, editors, and writers can be hired to ensure the quality of the presentation. The larger staff leads to a faster turnaround time for content, and in the case of *Siskel and Ebert*, the talent focuses on watching and reviewing films instead of the production itself. Thus, a Buena Vista–produced program like *Siskel and Ebert* reviewed more films and produced more episodes than the web-based *Half in the Bag*.

Nevertheless, the lack of backing by a major corporation may have freed the reviewers of *Half in the Bag* to be more honest in sharing their opinions. Buena Vista, the production

company that produced *Siskel and Ebert*, may have created a conflict of interest for *Siskel and Ebert* as the company simultaneously produced other films and television shows through their parent company, The Walt Disney Corporation. Among the films The Walt Disney Corporation released in 1992 was the highest-grossing film of the year, *Aladdin* ("Top Grossing U.S. Titles," 2015). *Aladdin* received two thumbs-up from *Siskel and Ebert*, as did several other Walt Disney films that year.

However, at the time of this study, *Half in the Bag* had no parent company to answer to. Not having to answer to big film studios could allow for additional freedom to assess a film from an academic standpoint. This freedom could also allow the longer film reviews as well as increased use of film terminology, which was recorded in the results of this study.

Observations on Program Structure

The presentation style on *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag* differed somewhat. First, *Half in the Bag* often began and ended a program with comedic skits. These comedic skits were sometimes relevant to the film being reviewed, but more often than not were a completely separate entity. Additionally, these skits were serialized, with a continuing story arc throughout the episodes.

This was quite different from the presentation style of *Siskel and Ebert*, which was presented in a journalistic manner. With the exception of a holiday-themed episode, *Siskel and Ebert* never wavered from discussion of the films reviewed.

A second difference between *Siskel and Ebert* and *Half in the Bag* was the use of language. As a web-based program, *Half in the Bag* had the freedom to use profanity, something that The Walt Disney Corporation as well as the FCC likely would have frowned upon. This use of profanity may have also been representative of the intended audience of *Half in the Bag*.

Although *Siskel and Ebert* was a family-friendly program, *Half in the Bag*'s profanity could have limited the show's potential audience to adults. Whether this was intentional or not on the part of the creators of *Half in the Bag* was not clear; a narrowed audience due to profanity could be a consequence of its use.

The tone of the two programs also differed. *Siskel and Ebert* was presented in a serious tone, whereas the tone of *Half in the Bag* was ad hoc and conversational. *Half in the Bag*'s more relaxed tone was highlighted by the program's reviewers consuming alcohol throughout their reviews, something a family-friendly programs like *Siskel and Ebert* would likely have avoided.

Observations of the Eras

When comparing the Internet reviewers to the television reviewers in this study, it was important to keep in mind that the programs were produced in very different eras. Television viewers in 1992 were likely limited in their choice of programming to the big three channels and a small selection of cable stations. This limitation on programming may have resulted in viewers tuning in to *Siskel and Ebert* who were not specifically interested in the show but could not find a more interesting program in the same timeslot. Modern Internet viewers are more likely to have a wide choice of content with on-demand streaming services, such as Netflix and Hulu.

Additionally, the viral promotion modern blockbusters receive online today before a film's release may influence reviewers' opinions. Blogs, spoiler websites, and trailer reaction videos across the web discuss every minute detail available at extensive length (Wollmer et al., 2013). In 1992, promotion of a film was likely limited to a poster and a trailer, potentially limiting any bias that the reviewers may have had going to view a film, whereas in 2012 it may have been difficult to avoid exposure to a new release's plot details and production information.

The modern era has also changed how we view video content, and this, in turn, may have an effect. Recent trends have shown an increase in the use of mobile devices, such as cellular smartphones and tablets, to access online content (Sevetson & Boucek, 2013). Furthermore, sales statistics indicated that by the end of 2015, tablets would be outselling computers for the first time in history (Anthony, 2014).

As a result of the changing viewing habits of modern media consumers, content such as *Half in the Bag* may be viewed potentially anywhere anytime. This change in how we access media content may have resulted in a more passive viewing experience when compared to traditional television programs. To view an episode of *Siskel and Ebert* in 1992, a viewer likely had to tune in at the time the local affiliate aired the program. Additionally, a television viewer in 1992 was likely required to remain in a single room to view the episode.

This difference in the way the different programs were viewed may have had an influence on the presenters and, in turn, the way the programs were presented. For instance, an episode of *Siskel and Ebert* was usually topical and thus was not usually scheduled to be broadcast more than once. Consequently, because *Siskel and Ebert* episodes aired only once, the reviewers may not have needed to focus on perfection as much as their modern counterparts.

As of this writing, every *Half in the Bag* episode was available to stream from the show's official website (*Half in the Bag*, 2015). Because every episode is available to stream at almost anytime, extra care may be needed on the part of the reviewers to ensure that the content will be relevant at a future date. In fact, during a video speculating about the plot of an upcoming film release, one of the program's hosts claimed they might remove the video if the plot turned out to be different from what they had discussed (Stoklassa & Evans, 2015).

Differences in Influence

As Koh et al. pointed out in 2010, film reviewers can have a considerable amount of influence on a film's success based on their reviews. For Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, this was certainly true. The duo's trademark "two thumbs-up" became a sign for moviegoers that a film was a must-see, and "two thumbs-down" indicated that a film was a waste of time.

In contrast, although *Half in the Bag* has an engaged and dedicated fan base, the web series has nowhere near the influence that *Siskel and Ebert* did in its prime. *Half in the Bag* is not without influence, however, as the program has resulted in multiple viral videos throughout the show's online run. One video that repeatedly pointed out the flaws in the plot of Ridley Scott's *Alien* prequel *Prometheus* possibly prompted a change in the marketing of the Blu-Ray version of the film (Seibold, 2012).

Limitations

The most important limitation of this study was the sample size. Although a complete summer season of the web-based program *Half in the Bag* and the television program *Siskel and Ebert* was analyzed, these two programs represent only one program from each medium. The programs were selected for their popularity within their mediums; however, a great variety of programs could have been compared, and selecting a different program may have altered the results of this study.

However, limiting the sample size was necessary to complete the data collection with the limited resources available to the researcher. Because the researcher analyzed each episode for four factors, the researcher had to view each episode four times. This resulted in a long and tedious process of data collection that would have been difficult to complete with additional programs to analyze.

An additional limitation of this study was the lack of current television-based film review programs that could have been compared to a web-based program. *At the Movies*, the program that replaced *Siskel and Ebert,* was cancelled in 2010, and all other programs that competed with *Siskel and Ebert* in the ratings were cancelled by the early 2000s (Itzkoff, 2011).

With the lack of a modern comparable film review program on television, the researcher chose to focus on the peak in popularity for both programs. The researcher analyzed the content of the different mediums but did not control for influences based on the year the episodes were presented. The researcher considered choosing a year in which a television program and a web program existed, but the closest measureable year was 2006, when web-based reviews were still in their infancy and television-based film reviews were already in decline.

Accessibility to video content was also a limiting factor in conducting this study. At the beginning of this study, all *Siskel and Ebert* episodes were available on the website SiskelandEbert.com. Unfortunately, Buena Vista Television shut down the website in 2011, leaving only a handful of the program's episodes available on the Internet, and the remaining episodes were almost impossible to find. Luckily, the devoted fan base of *Siskel and Ebert* created SiskelandEbert.org, which holds an extensive library of episodes. The researcher used the website's resources to complete the study.

Further limitations were caused by the researcher's inability to directly observe each program's production process. Although limited interview content with the producers of *Half in the Bag* and *Siskel and Ebert* exists, the researcher was unable to locate a full account of the programs' production schedules. Such information may have provided insight into the amount of time spent producing each program, as well as the roles each reviewer played in the program's production.

Further Research

Further research should analyze multiple television- and web-based reviewers to eliminate any bias connected to an individual program and provide a mean assessment of each medium. Research could also include print-based film reviews.

Future research of web-based film reviewers could also explore the content of the reviews to find common patterns or structures. Additionally, analysis of the types of arguments and fallacies used when reviewing a film would also be an interesting area of research that may help reveal the reviewers' motivation.

The cause of the polarized nature of web-based film reviewers' analyses could also be explored in further research. Although previous studies showed that web-based reviewers favored extremely positive or negative reviews, the results of this study showed the opposite. The trend may be Internet wide, or may be a specific factor of *Half in the Bag* and not a universal phenomenon.

Future research could also explore web-based film critics and their traditional counterparts during multiple years in order to discover whether the reviews are consistent. Similarly, additional research could examine which genres are most likely to be panned by film reviewers for each medium.

Finally, future studies could analyze why audiences view film reviews in general and audiences' expectations when viewing these reviews. Research may reveal that traditional television-based reviews provided a service to their audiences that differed from the type of service web-based film reviewers provide.

Conclusion

Although the look of web-based film review shows such as *Half in the Bag* seems similar to their traditional counterparts *Siskel and Ebert*, many factors differ. *Half in the Bag* may provide viewers with a longer presentation than did their traditional counterparts, but, as a whole, the web series reviewed considerably fewer films per episode.

The web-based film critics seemed less inclined to present opinions, were more likely to use film terminology when reviewing a film, and were more likely to pan a film than their traditional counterparts. These factors point to an inherent difference between these two programs.

Siskel and Ebert focused on recommending or condemning films while *Half in the Bag* focused on analyzing films. Thus, while the overall trend seems to be leading to a convergence of the Internet and television. In the movement of programming from television to the web, web-based film review programs such as *Half in the Bag* do not present the same type of content that previous television reviewers did. Instead, web-based programs are presenting a new form of film analysis for entertainment and entertaining a niche audience of cinephiles.

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Appendix A: Film Terminology

Integrative Arts 10

Film Terminology and Other Resources

Animation - The process of photographing drawings or objects a frame at a time; by changing a drawing or moving an object slightly before each frame is taken, the illusion of motion is realized.

Auteur (French for "author") - literally the director, who is regarded as the "author" of a film because he/she has primary control and responsibility for the final product. The Auteur theory insists that a film be considered in terms of the entire canon of a director and that each Auteur earns that title by displaying a unique cinematic style.

Background Music- Music accompanying action on the screen, but coming from no discernible source within the film.

Blocking - The arrangements made for the composition of a scene, especially the placement and movements of actors.

Boom - A long mobile beam or pole used to hold a microphone or camera.

Cinema Verite - A candid-camera style of filmmaking using hand-held cameras, natural sound, grainy high-contrast black-and-white film, and the appearance of no rehearsal and only basic editing.

Cinematographer (camera man or director of photography) - The person who supervises all aspects of photography from the operation of cameras to lighting.

Clip - A brief segment excerpted from a film.

Commentator - A voice (the person speaking may be either seen or unseen) commenting on the action of a film. A commentator, unlike a narrator, provides supposedly unbiased information, maintaining apparent perspective and distance from what occurs on the screen.

Composition - The placement of people or objects within the frame and the arrangements for actual movements within the frame or by the camera.

Continuity - The narrative growth of a film created through a combination of visuals and sound (resembling the "story" in print literature).

Continuity Sketches (See Storyboard.)

Crane Shot - A shot taken from a boom that can move both horizontally and vertically.

Cross-Cutting (parallel editing) - A method of editing in which the point of view (p.o.v.) switches alternately from events at one location to those of another related action. The action is ususlly simultaneous and used to create a dynamic tension as in the chase scene in D.W. Griffith's *A Girl and Her Trust.* (See Intercutting for the distinction between cuts.)

Cut - An individual strip of film consisting of a single shot; the separation of two pieces of action as a "transition" (used when one says "cut from the shot of the boy to the shot of the girl"); a verb meaning to join shots together in the editing process; or an order to end a take ("cut!").

Cutter (See Editor.)

Dailies (See Rushes.)

Deep Focus (depth photography) - Keeping images close by and far away in sharp focus simultaneously.

Depth of Field - The area within which objects are in focus; a large depth of field allows a great range of objects to be in focus simultaneously, while a shallow depth of field offers a very limited area in focus. Depth of field normally depends on how far "open" a lens is (a lens works

much like an eye, with the pupil opening or contracting to control light). An "open" lens (for example, f 1.4) creates a shallow depth of field while a "stopped down" (contracted) lens (for example f 16) creates a large depth of field.

Director - The person responsible for overseeing all aspects of the making of a film.

Dissolve (lap dissolve) - A method of making a transition from one shot to another by briefly superimposing one image upon another and then allowing the first image to disappear. A dissolve is a stronger form of transition than a cut and indicates a distinct separation in action. Dolly A platform on wheels serving as a camera mount capable-of movement in any direction.

Dolly Shot - A moving shot taken from a dolly. A Dolly-In moves the camera toward the subject, while a Dolly-Out moves the camera away from the subject. A dolly shot creates a sense of movement through space by capturing changes in perspective.

Double Exposure (superimposition) - Two distinct images appearing simultaneously with one superimposed upon the other.

Dubbing (lip sync) - The process of matching voice with the lip movements of an actor on the screen; dubbing also refers to any aspect of adding or combining sounds to create a film's final soundtrack.

Editing (continuity editing, narrative montage) - The process of splicing individual shots together into a complete film. Editing (as opposed to Montage) puts shots together to create a smoothly flowing narrative in an order making obvious sense in terms of time and place.

Editor (cutter) - The person responsible for assembling the various visual and audial components of a film into a coherent and effective whole.

Fade - A transitional device in which either an image gradually dims until the viewer sees only a black screen (Fade-Out) or an image slowly emerges from a black screen to a clear and bright picture (Fade-In). A fade provides a strong break in continuity, usually setting off sequences.

Fast Motion - (accelerated motion) Movements on the screen appearing more rapid than they would in actual life. For example, a man riding a bicycle will display legs pumping furiously while he flashes through city streets at the speed of a racing car. A filmmaker achieves fast motion by running film through his camera at a speed slower than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection of 24 frames per second speeds up the action.

Fill Light - Light used to control shadows by "filling in" certain dark areas.

Film Stock - Unexposed strips of celluloid holding light-sensitive emulsions.

Filters - Transparent glass of gelatin placed in front of or behind a lens to control coloration; some filters cut out certain types of light (such as ultra- violet); others create a soft, hazy appearance, and still others provide a dominant color when used with color films.

Fine Cut - The final assembling of all the various audial and visual components of a film.

Fish-Eye - An extreme wide-angle lens taking in (and distorting) an immense area.

Flashback - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to time past. Flashback may be subjective (showing the thoughts and memory of a character) or objective (returning to earlier events to show their relationship to the present).

Flash Forward - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to a future time. Flash forward, like flashback, may be subjective (showing precognition or fears of what might happen) or objective (suggesting what will eventually happen and thus setting up relationships for an audience to perceive).

Flashframe - A shot lasting only a few frames; the shortness of a flashframe makes its content difficult to assimilate. When many flashframes follow each other, they create a feeling of intense action and often visually resemble the effects of stroboscopic light; when used alone, flashframes usually act as flashbacks or Hash forwards.

Flip - A transitional device (now used rarely) in which an image appears to flip over, revealing another image on its backside; the effect is much like flipping a coin from one side to the other.

Focal Length - The distance from the focal point of a lens to the plane of the film (for viewers and cameramen, this is seen as the amount of area a lens can photograph from a given distance.)

Focus-Through (racking) - A change of the field in focus taking the viewer from one object to another that was previously out of focus.

Frame - A single photographic image imprinted on a length of film; also the perimeter of an image as seen when projected on a screen (a filmmaker sees the frame as the boundaries of his camera's view-finder). Freeze Frame A single frame repeated for an extended time, consequently looking like a still photograph.

High-Angle Shot - A shot taken from above a subject, creating a sense of "looking down" upon whatever is photographed.

Intercutting- The alternation between actions taking place at two distinct locations to make one composite scene. For example, cutting between two people involved in the same telephone conversation. The distinction between this and cross cutting is one of compression of time. The intercut can be used to speed up a scene and eliminate large pieces of time that would slow a story down.

Iris - A technique used to show an image in only one small round area of the screen. An Iris-Out begins as a pinpoint and then moves outward to reveal the full scene, while an Iris-In moves

inward from all sides to leave only a small image on the screen. An iris can be either a transitional device (using the image held as a point of transition) or a way of focusing attention on a specific part of a scene without reducing the scene in size.

Jump Cut - An instantaneous cut from one action to another, at first seemingly unrelated, action. Jump cuts will usually call attention to themselves because of the abrupt change in time and/or place.

Key Light - The primary source of illumination

High-Key - light brilliantly illuminates a set;

Low-Key - light provides dim lighting, usually with heavy, dark shadows.

Lap Dissolve (See Dissolve.)

Library Shot - (stock shot) Any shot not taken for a particular film but used in it.

Lip Sync (See Dubbing.)

Local Music - Music originating within a scene and audible to both the characters in the film and the audience.

Location - A place outside-the studio where shooting occurs.

Long Lens - Any lens with a focal length greater than normal; a normal focal length approximates the size relationships seen by the human eye, while a long focal length creates a narrower angle of vision, causing a larger image. A long lens alters perspective by flattening a subject into its background. (See telephoto.)

Loop Film - A film with ends joined, creating a loop that can be run continuously through a projector.

Low-Angle Shot - A shot taken from below a subject, creating a sense of "looking up to" whatever is photographed.

Mask - A device placed in front of a lens to reduce the horizontal or vertical size of the frame or to create a particular shape (for example, periscope eyepiece, binoculars, or gun-sight).

Match Cut - A cut intended to blend two shots together unobtrusively (opposed to a Jump Cut).

Matte Shot - A process for combining two separate shots on one print, resulting in a picture that looks as if it had been photographed all at once. For example, a shot of a man walking might be combined with a shot of a card table in such a way that the man appears to be six inches high and walking on a normal size card table.

Metteur-En-Scene - A director or filmmaker (often used to indicate a director who does not deserve the title auteur).

Mise-En-Scene - The aura emanating from details of setting, scenery, and staging.

Mix - The process of combining all sounds at their proper levels from several tracks and placing them onto a master track.

Montage - (dynamic editing, expressive montage, conditional montage) A method of putting shots together in such a way that dissimilar materials are juxtaposed to make a statement. A shot of a man followed by a shot of a peacock, for example, declares that the man is pompous. (See Editing.)

MOS - Any segment of film taken without sound. (The letters MOS come from early foreign directors who wanted pictures taken "mit out sound.")

Moviola - A special projection machine (used by film editors) that holds several reels of film simultaneously and can run at variable speeds, backward or forward, and stop at any frame. (Moviola was originally a brand name but now refers only to a type of projection machine.)

Negative Image - An image with color value reversed from positive to negative, making white seem black and black appear white.

Neorealism - A film style using documentary techniques for fictional purposes. Most neorealist films rely on high-contrast black-and-white film, nonprofessional actors, and natural settings. Neorealism began as a movement among a group of filmmakers in Italy after World War II.

New Wave (Nouvelle vague) - A recent movement in French filmmaking based mainly on the notion of the Auteur. The movement was begun in the late 1950s by a group of young filmmakers (including Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Goddard, Louis Malle, and Alain Resnais) interested in exploring new potentials for film art.

Nonsynchronous Sound - Sound that combines sounds from one source with visuals from another, such as intense argument with only a man walking alone visible, or the sounds of a rooster accompanying visuals of a classroom lecturer. (See Synchronous Sound.)

Objective Camera - The attempt to suggest that the camera acts only as a passive recorder of what happens in front of it. The use of objective camera relies on de-emphasis of technique, involving minimal camera movement and editing.

Optical Printer - A device used to "print" the images of one film onto another film through direct photography.

Out-Take - A take that is not included in the final version of a film.

Pan - A shot in which a stationary camera turns horizontally, revealing new areas.

Parallel Editing (See Cross-Cutting.)

Perspective - The way objects appear to the eye in terms of their relative positions and distances.

Pixillatxon - A technique using cartoon methods to create movement by objects or people. For example, a man will stand with feet together and be photo- graphed, then he will repeat this action over and over, but move slightly forward each time; the result will show the man apparently moving forward (usually rapidly) without moving any part of his body.

Process Shot - A shot coordinated with another image created by Rear Projection, making the resulting picture look like a single simultaneous shot. A typical process shot shows the faces of two people riding in a car; behind them (as seen through the rear window) moves the usual traffic of a city street. The traffic has been added by rear projection, creating a process shot.

Producer - The person who is responsible for all of the business aspects of making and releasing a film.

Racking (See Focus-Through.)

Reaction Shot - A shot showing one or more characters reacting to an action or statement. Rear Projection (back projection) The process of projecting an image onto a translucent screen from the back side rather than over the heads of the viewers as is usually done. Filmmakers use rear projection to film an action against a projected background, thus recording on film both the stage action and the rear-projected image. (See Process Shot.)

Reverse Angle Shot - A shot of an object or person taken in the direction opposite that of the preceding shot (for example, a shot of the gates of a prison from within followed by a reverse angle shot showing the gates from outside). Rough Cut The initial assembling of the shots of a film, done without added sound.

Rushes - (dailies) The lengths of footage taken during the course of filming and processed as the shooting of a film proceeds.

Scenario (See Script.) - Scene A series of Shots taken at one basic time and place. A scene is one of the basic structural units of film, with each scene contributing to the next largest unit of film, the sequence.

Script - (scenario, shooting script) - A written description of the action, dialogue, and camera placements for a film.

Sequence - A structural unit of a film using time, location, or some pattern to link together a number of scenes.

Shooting - Ratio The ratio in a finished film of the amount of film shot to the length of the final footage. Shot A single uninterrupted action of a camera as seen by a viewer (see Take). Shots are labeled according to the apparent distance of the subject from the camera: extreme long-shot (ELS) also called an establishing shot; long-shot (LS); medium long-shot (MLS); medium or mid-shot (MS); medium close-up (MCU); close-up (CU); and extreme close-up (ECU). Although distinctions among shots must be defined in terms of the subject, the human body furnishes the usual standard of definition: ELS, a person is visible but setting dominates; LS, person fills vertical line of the frame; MLS, knees to head; MS, waist up; MCU, shoulders up; CU, head only; ECU, an eye.

Slow Motion - Movements on the screen appearing slower than they would in actual life. For example, a diver will seem to float to the water gently rather than fall at the speed dictated by gravity. A filmmaker achieves slow motion by running film through his camera at a speed faster than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection at 24 frames per second slows down the action.

Soft Focus - A slightly blurred effect achieved by using a special filter or lens, or by shooting with a normal lens slightly out of focus.

Still - A photograph taken with a still (versus motion) camera.

Stock Shot (See Library Shot.)

Storyboard (continuity sketches) - A series of sketches (resembling a cartoon strip) showing potential ways various shots might be filmed.

Subjective Camera - Shots simulating what a character actually sees; audience, character, and camera all "see" the same thing. Much subjective camera involves distortion, indicating abnormal mental states. Shots suggesting how a viewer should respond are also called "subjective" (for example, a high-angle shot used to make a boy look small and helpless).

Superimposition (See Double Exposure.)

Swish Pan - A quick pan from one position to another caused by spinning the camera on its vertical axis and resulting in a blurring of details between the two points. Sometimes a swish pan is used as a transition by creating a blur and then ending the blur at an action in an entirely different place or time.

Synchronous Sound - Sound coordinated with and derived from a film's visuals. (See Nonsynchronous Sound.)

Take - A single uninterrupted action of a camera as seen by a filmmaker. A take is unedited footage as taken from the camera, while a shot is the uninterrupted action left after editing.

Telephoto Lens (See Long Lens) - A lens with an extremely long focal length capable of making distant objects appear nearer and thus larger. (A telephoto has greater power of magnification than a Long Lens.)

Tilt Shot - A shot taken by angling a stationary camera up (tilt-up) or down (tilt-down).

Tracking Shot (traveling shot, trucking shot) - Any shot using a mobile camera that follows (or moves toward or away from) the subject by moving on tracks or by being mounted on a vehicle.

Trailer - A short segment of film that theaters use to advertise a feature film.

Trucking Shot - Any moving shot with the camera on a mobile mounting, but chiefly a moving shot taken with a camera mounted on a truck.

Two Shot - A shot of two people, usually from the waist up.

Voice-Over - Any spoken language not seeming to come from images on the screen.

Wide-Angle Lens - Any lens with a focal length shorter than normal, thus allowing a greater area to be photographed. A wide-angle lens alters perspective by making nearby objects seem relatively larger than those far away and by increasing the apparent distance between objects both laterally and in depth.

Wipe - A transitional device in which one image slowly replaces another by pushing the other out of the way.

Zoom Freeze - A zoom shot that ends in a freeze frame.

Zoom Shot - A shot accomplished with a lens capable of smoothly and continuously changing focal lengths from wide-angle to telephoto (zoom in) or telephoto to wide-angle (zoom out).

Appendix B

List of terms/phrases used when denoting opinion, collected through observation of "Siskel and Ebert" programs and "Half in the Bag" webisodes.

Positive Opinion

Accessible
Accurate
Appropriate
Beautiful
Best
Best Part
Bright
Cares
Charming
Cheap
Classy
Connected
Convincing
Credible
Different
Dynamic
Edgy
Effective
Energy
Engaging
Enjoy
Excellent
Exciting
Exhilarating
Fabulous
Fan
Fascinating
Favorite
Fine
First Rate
Fresh
Fun
Funny
Good
Gorgeous
Great
Gritty
Heart
Honest
Impressive
Improved
Inspired
Interesting
Joy
Just Right
Laughed
Liked
Logical
Loved
Magnificent
Memorable
Natural
Neat
Nice
Passionate
Pays off
Pleasing
Positive
Powerful
Provocative
Quality
Recommend
Relatable
Richness
Riotous
Sexy
Sharp
Skill
Small
Smart
Sold Me
Sophisticated
Special
Spectacular
Strong
Surprising
Sweet
Swell
Terrific
Thoughtful
Top of Form
Tough
Tremendous
Warm
Well Done
Well Drawn
Well Played
Wonderful
Works

Negative Opinion

Amateur
Awful
Bad
Blew it
Bobo-brained
Boring
Campy
Cartoonish
Cheap
Cluster-fuck
Confusing
Contrived
Conventional
Convoluted
Cornball
Corny
Criticism
Dead
Dead in the water
Derivative
Desperate
Didn't believe
Didn't enjoy
Didn't laugh
Didn't Work
Dimwitted
Disaster
Disliked
Distracting
Dull
Dumb
Dumb
Farmed out
Flat line
Flaw
Forced
Forget it
Forgettable
Frustrated
Fucked Up
Gaff
Gaffe
Groaner
Hacks
Horrible
Issues
Joyless
Lack of effort
Lame
Lame
Laughable
Laughable
Less effective
Melodramatic
Mess
Mess
Mindless
Mistake
Needless
Negative
No Insight
Not convincing
Not Good
Not Smart
Obvious
Outrageous
Overblown
Phony
Pointless
Preachy
Predictable
Problem
Retarded
Ridiculous
Ridiculous
Routine
Sad
Schlocky
Silly
Softball
Stagey
Stiff
Stupid
Stupid
Tasteless
Thrown Away
Too Bad
Too Far
Too Much
Tortured
Unbelievable
Underwritten
Unimpressed
7Unnecessary
Unrealistic
Waste
Waste of time
Weakness
Works
Worse
Worthless

Neutral Opinion

Confused
Didn't care
Didn't see
Emotional
Generic
Nothing
Ok
Rehash
Unrelated
Who Cares
Acceptable
Logical
Serviceable
Disposable
McGuffin
Simple
Don't Know
Formula
Trivial
Predictable
Didn't Object
Routine
Uncertain
Moody