

Hollywood morality

Movies should not center around immoral plots



CHRISTINA BARROWS

It is high time the movie industry received a make over. The quality of movies today is decreasing steadily as sex, drugs and box-office dollars become the standard for cinema entertainment.

Unfortunately the area targeted the heaviest is also the most dangerous: teenagers.

This new wave of steamy teen movies with ready-made television stars entices teenagers and frightens parents. But far worse are the times where teens have no decent role models and no enforced family values.

After observing several teenagers, it is clear adolescents admire, imitate and relate to the stars they watch on television weekly. It is disgusting these "role models" choose movie roles that influence teens in the wrong direction.

Movies themselves should not be blamed directly, if parents allow their children to attend these movies it is clear where the finger should be pointed, although many times part of the thrill is to sneak into the theater. Still, if an adolescent is taught strong moral values, they are less likely to be influenced by what they see in the big screen, and will probably not even wish to attend these movies.

Two recently-released teen movies with a blatant disregard for morals are *Cruel Intentions* and *Jawbreaker*.

In the movie *Cruel Intentions*, the character Kathryn offers her stepbrother Sebastian a wager that would cause any advocate of family values to cringe. He deflowers a virgin, he receives the opportunity to attend these movies.

What might shock parents most about these new movies is the almost absolute absence of parents.

In the movie *Cruel Intentions*, the two leading characters spend the whole summer without seeing their parents at all and do not seem to care. Sebastian asks his stepsister, "How is your gold-digging whore of a mother enjoying Bali?"

To which Kathryn responds, "She suspects that your impotent, alcoholic father is diddling the maid." This disgusting banter might be amusing to some, but provides teenagers with a very poor example of how to speak of their parents. Such disrespect for parents is very wrong but some argue the lack of parental figures is the reason for their bad behavior.

Although this could be a noble attempt to tell parents they need to spend more time with their children, the movie's possible message is lost to the immature audience it targets.

Rose McGowan, the star of the new high school movie *Jawbreaker*, is a sad role model for teenage girls. Her character Courtney, a snobby high school sex fiend, accidentally kills the prom queen and decides to stage a homicidal rape to cover it up.

McGowan said this about her character, "She may not have a lot of morals, but what's wrong with being immoral?" This is the wrong message to send to the teen generation.

Every generation does have its teen-exploitation movies, designed to tap the adolescent's wallets. According to Newsweek, recent teen movie *She's All That* made \$16.5 million its opening weekend and only cost about \$10 million to make. It is very clear



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

teenagers are a profitable market.

Cruel Intentions director Roger Kumble expressed his hope teens would find a way to attend the rated R movie stating, "I can't do a PG-13 *Dangerous Liaisons* — it's going to be fluff."

Did it occur to Kumble *Dangerous Liaisons* was an adult film adapted in 1988 from the 18th century novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos De Laclos?

These teen stars are hardly Glenn Close, John Malkovich and Michelle Pfeiffer and this movie does not stand a chance at winning three Oscars because of its inconceivable adaptation with a cast too old for

their parts playing characters too young for their behavior and dialogue.

So, for those with the desire to attend motion pictures which strive for excellency instead of the fast hormonal buck, it is time to demand more, especially for the more impressionable youth.

This is not to say critically acclaimed movies might not contain sex and drugs, but these movies will not imply certain amoral activities as acceptable, or even normal.

Christina Barrows is a sophomore English major.

Cinema does not cause immorality, only reflects it

It is no secret that the recent trend in movies has been towards ever more sexually explicit and violent plot lines.



LUKE SAUGIER

Perfect examples of this trend are the new movies *Cruel Intentions*, *200 Cigarettes* and *Jawbreaker*. These movies are at best amoral and at worst truly perverse. They should not, however, be blamed for the lack of morals in society as a whole.

Those who assert that movies, television and video games are to blame for the increasing violence and lack of morals in America, particularly among the youth, have confused the symptom with the disease.

While it has been satisfactorily proven that there is a connection between violent behavior and violence seen in movies, there is not a proven connection to the level of violence. Dick Rolfe, the head of The Dove Foundation, said he remains unconvinced of the connection between violence in movies and in real life.

He goes on to note that the reaction of the public in the 1930s to a movie which contained eight murders, all off camera, was the same as the modern reaction to movies such as *Pulp Fiction*, indicating that it is not the presence of violence which is to blame, but the presence of more violence than the audience is accustomed to.

Society only becomes more violent when the violence in movies is raised to a new level. This level is now apparently at a maximum, and as people become desensitized, it may not affect them adversely.

The fact is that people go to the movies to be entertained. Thus, they do not want to see personalities and situations that they see and hear about every day.

As real life becomes more bizarre and violent, the filmmakers must become ever-more graphic and explicit in their depictions of the same topics that have been the subject of human interest and storytelling since the beginning of time: sex and violence.

One of parents main complaints about the movie *Cruel Intentions* is its extremely explicit language, usually in reference to sex. But after the Starr Report what should we expect?

The Clinton scandal is a perfect example of real life, not movies, expanding the limit of what is standard fare for mass media. To keep their material novel enough to be entertaining moviemakers must keep their plots and characters always one step beyond culturally accepted norms.

Filmmakers are now beginning to realize there is little that is outside the experience of most adults. This is the reason so many of the movies to come out lately deal with sexuality, violence and drug use among teens.

With the lowering of the characters' ages, material that would not be exceptional were it a movie about adults becomes vastly more provocative. In addition, many movies such as *Varsity Blues* are calculated to appeal to, and advertised to, a younger audience.

As box-office figures show, targeting a young audience with adult material is just as effective as targeting an adult audience with more graphic material.

As Newsweek pointed out, movies that deal with teen sexuality, drug use and violence are nothing new. In the past, movies such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* have covered the same subject matter as more recent movies like *Varsity Blues* but in a less explicit manner.

Again the point is made that what is changed is not the subject matter, but rather the manner in which it is depicted.

Graphic movies should not be blamed for a degradation of societal mores. The fact that the movies our culture produces are increasingly violent and sexual is an indicator of where our culture is headed, not what is forcing our culture in a certain direction.

Blaming movies for the ills of society is the same as blaming the gas gauge for making your car run out of gas.

Luke Saugier is a sophomore petroleum engineering major.

MAIL CALL

Reader questions basis for writers' creation statements

I read, with interest, the readers' opinions advanced in *The Battalion* regarding creationism. I was not surprised by the pro-creationism reactions published in the Mail Call, given the well-known religious leaning of southern United States citizens. The main pillar of social conservatism in human history has been religion, hence the forceful denial of scientific thought and attitudes.

The real source of concern was the inability of both writers of the Mar. 3 column, and the mail callers of Mar. 5, to back up any of their statements with closed premises of the sound kind.

The pro-creationist writer tried to adduce mathematical reasons that were way out of her depth while the pro-evolutionist, realizing the intellectual dishonesty of delving too deeply into the philosophy of religion in one edition of a newspaper column, stuck to a more logical, but also unrefereed, argument.

Ditto for the mailcallers, as the impulse to defend creed sprung to the surface and manifested itself most unwholesomely.

I do not quite understand why unreason should pervade an academic environment such as Texas A&M's. Those who choose to shy away from the warmth of truth's fire will forever dwell in the harsh frost of cultural fallacy.

Ayokunle Ogunshola
Class of '00

EDITORIAL

The Battalion

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RAILROADED

University must address railroad situation while options available

For years, the railroad tracks along Wellborn Road were an umbilical cord for A&M students. Trains took students home to cities such as Dallas or Houston. And before the development of the Northgate area, a trolley shuttled students to downtown Bryan. However, with the changing times bringing the Texas 6 bypass and Easterwood Airport to the area, the train is no longer a primary as a transportation for A&M students.

Due to the changing landscape and the continued growth of the community, it is imperative that the railroad tracks be relocated within the next three years.

With the proposed doubling of traffic on the track and the addition of a second track, this need is even more apparent.

With the proposed increase from 24 trains traveling through the area per day to 45 per day, the traffic delays throughout the community, not just on campus, would be horrendous. This would mean a train bringing the Bryan-College Station community to a halt every half hour.

While the University's proposed overpass for the train is a start, there is still the remaining portions of the Bryan-College Station area that will be affected by the train traffic. Whether late at night when a train blows its whistle or when the trains crawl along crossings and sometimes come to a complete stop, blocking traffic, the trains represent a major disturbance for area residents.

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