

Tekst 8

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This time at least, listen to the critics

- I overheard a woman on her mobile this morning, updating a friend about her weekend. “We went to see *The Da Vinci Code*,” she said. There was a brief pause – just long enough to accommodate the words “What was it like?” – before she delivered the verdict: “Not good ... not good.” Well, we bloody told you so, I thought.
- In common with millions of other people over the past few days this woman had ignored the devastating reviews of movie critics – and in doing so she had allowed the film’s studio and distributor to claim a kind of victory. After the weekend the film was the top of the box-office lists in the United States and actually broke records for overseas earnings. And I couldn’t help wondering why, given the virtual unanimity of the reviews. Had we all suffered for nothing?
- I don’t really ask the question in a spirit of professional resentment. Indeed it seems to me that it would be a bad thing if critics were able to dictate the success of cultural projects. But there was something in the way the woman spoke that seemed to imply a larger statement.
- “No, really,” she was saying, “they were actually telling the truth this time.” And the fact that she’d had to go and check it out for herself was one solution to the riddle. The consumers don’t trust the critics, which means that quite a lot of people are willing to risk wasting their money and their time rather than take the reviews as read.
- Critics are conditioned to cinematic snobbery, might be one expression of this distrust – happy enough to send their readers to a low-budget Finnish tragedy about manic depression but always sniffy about Hollywood thrill rides. They don’t want to lose face in front of their colleagues, after all.
- In this case I suspect that the very consistency of the reaction was a kind of provocation in itself. This then unleashed that most lucrative box-office instinct - the urge to judge for oneself. Without intending to, the critics wrote reviews so uniform that it looked like a conspiracy. It can’t really be that bad, readers must have thought, on seeing lines like “as exciting as watching your parents play sudoku”. Well, yes it can. But, in writing that, I only contribute to the effect. If I were the movie-distributor, I’d select the worst insults from the reviews and add the copy-line “Are you going to let them tell you what to do?” Since I’m not, I’ll just say trust the woman with the mobile phone. Please.

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- “Well, we bloody told you so, I thought.” (regels 8-9)
- 1p 30 In alinea 2 (regels 10-22) staat wie de schrijver bedoelt met “we”. Noteer het betreffende woord/de betreffende woorden op je antwoordblad.
- 1p 31 Which of the following is true of the film *The Da Vinci Code*, according to paragraph 2 (lines 10-22)?
- A It became an instant commercial success, despite all the highly negative reviews.
 - B It showed that even bad publicity helps promote products, if only there is enough of it.
 - C It was judged far more positively by the general public than by the critics.
 - D It was the most successful film that its production company had released up to that point.
- “But there ... larger statement.” (regels 28-30)
- 1p 32 Leg (kort) uit wat deze “larger statement” volgens de tekst inhoudt.
- 1p 33 Which of the following describes what the writer means by “the riddle” (line 35)?
- A “she delivered ... not good’.” (lines 7-8)
 - B “In common with ... movie critics” (lines 10-13)
 - C “it seems ... cultural projects” (lines 25-27)
 - D “No, really ... this time.” (lines 31-33)
- 1p 34 How do lines 41-49 relate to the point made in lines 37-40 (“quite a lot ... as read”)?
- A They aim to poke fun at it.
 - B They indicate its consequences.
 - C They present arguments against it.
 - D They provide a possible explanation for it.
- 1p 35 Which of the following does the writer suggest with respect to *The Da Vinci Code* in the last paragraph (lines 50-68)?
- A Its producers have cleverly exploited the public’s attitude towards reviewers.
 - B No matter what the critics say, it is up to the public to decide on its quality.
 - C The media have conducted a systematic campaign against it.
 - D The more negative reviews there are, the more people will want to see it.