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## Tekst 13

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

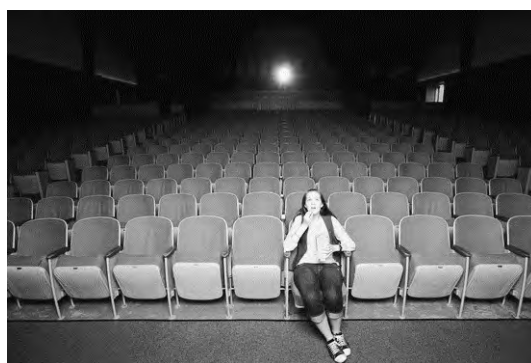
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## Why I am in the Front Row

By DAVID BORDWELL

- 1 With award season upon us, movie-lovers are rushing to the theaters to see the big contenders. And if you're like most people, you sit fairly far back, maybe even in the very last row.
- 2 For public gatherings, it seems, sitting in the rear is the default. In 1978, the economist Thomas Schelling famously offered seven hypotheses about why people don't fill up the front of an auditorium as fast as they fill up the back. His reflections were occasioned by giving a lecture to 800 people, none of whom would sit in the first dozen rows. I know the feeling, though on a smaller scale. In a lecture hall, seeing all of your students huddled so far away, you start to think you may have cooties.
- 3 As for the movies, when we were little, most of us didn't mind sitting up by the screen. But as we age, we seem to gravitate toward the rear. We're even told that we should sit a prescribed distance back, usually the dead center of the auditorium. A distance of two to three times the screen height is a common recommendation.
- 4 With the rise of 3-D — there are now over 22,000 3-D screens world-wide — the debate about where to sit has been rekindled. Some say the sweet spot remains the same, but others prefer to sit further back. A more distant view, they think, lessens the eyestrain of constantly refocusing on the changing depth.
- 5 I've never understood the impulse to flee from the action. I've always been a front-zone sitter. For me, sitting there is hard-core movie-going: nobody's head looms in front of you. You're less disturbed by latecomers. You have more leg



room, and should you wish to leave, the front row is the only one that lets you sneak out easily from any seat.

- 6 More than that, I like scanning the frame in great sweeps and even sometimes turning my head to follow the action. The early wide-screen technologies, like CinemaScope and Cinerama, used huge screens to immerse the audience, and even with today's smaller multiplex screens, I can recover something like that sense of being snugly wrapped in the movie's world.
- 7 When the picture first comes looming up, you do feel a little disconcerted and overwhelmed. But I find that I adapt in a minute or two. Even the extreme angle isn't a problem, partly because of perceptual constancy – the brain's tendency to see familiar objects as having a standard shape and size, despite changes in perspective.
- 8 I know that most people find this sheer madness, but I've found that sitting close is the preference of devoted movie fans. Be warned, though: It can get personal up there.
- 9 My strangest encounter came during a visit to a theater in Munich to see "Get Carter" (the Michael Caine version, not the Sylvester Stallone one), and I was the first entrant. I secured my front-row center post and suddenly found an aged German lady standing before me. Seeing that I was reading a book in English, she said, "Pardon me, you're in my seat." I looked around and saw that we were the only people there. "I always sit here," she said. "I come every night." I am a nice well-brought up guy, so I did the civilized thing. I relocated to the seat behind her. Soon "Get Carter" started. The old bat immediately fell asleep. She slept through the whole movie. I wanted to knock her upside the head. When I left, she was still out, snoring in *my* seat.

—Mr. Bordwell is a professor emeritus of film studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He writes regularly at [www.davidbordwell.net/blog](http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog).

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### **Tekst 13 Why I am in the front row**

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- 1p 43 “Why I am in the Front Row” (titel)  
Wordt er in deze tekst een groep genoemd die net als de schrijver een sterke voorkeur heeft voor een plaats op de eerste rij?  
Zo nee, antwoord “Nee”. Zo ja, noteer het nummer van de alinea waarin dit gebeurt.