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Review of Reviewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film

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ReViewing The Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film, by Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal. *Focal Point Series*, Gene Edward Veith, Jr., general editor. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2000. 180pp. \$12.99 ISBN 1-58134-203-9

Reviewed by Rory Patterson, User Education Librarian, Cedarville University, Cedarville, Ohio.

Today's students will spend an average of eleven years of their life doing a certain thing they are not trained to do: review television and movies. Peter Fraser and Vernon Neal, a professor and film critic respectively, have written *ReViewing The Movies* to help Christians knowledgeably evaluate television and movies for those eleven years (p. 142). Fraser and Neal provide guidelines on how to evaluate movies so their readers can know what good movies are and promote them, can use movies to witness, and can be entertained without being corrupted.

Fraser and Neal provide seven criteria that film critics use to evaluate a film as art, and then add the Christian component of truthfulness. They make the point that evaluating movies is not using a checklist, such as the number of swear words or amount of violence, but rather getting beneath the surface and thinking about its message. For

example, *Schindler's List* has language, violence, and other objectionable content, but the writers commend it for "its powerful moral statements" (p. 68). They use many other positive and negative examples to emphatically prove their points, yet do so in a way that keeps the book fun to read. If nothing else, the book is worth the price for the chapter "Reviewer's Guide" which lists movies by categories with their titles, directors, actors, and a sentence summary.

ReViewing The Movies is a practical book for all adult readers. A Christianity and Culture class could also use it. It lays a good foundation for why and how Christians should evaluate movies, and provides lists of further readings. Unlike many coauthored books, it is hard to tell who writes which parts, and the authors write well together, merging their expertise in film criticism and popular culture. So, let's re-view the movies.