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ECCENTRIC TANTRUMS
CO Massacre Movie Review

The National Rifle Association has been arming the mentally ill with assault weapons for years. And since the NRA is an appendage of the plutocracy running America, this will never change—in spite of Binghamton Police Chief Joseph Zikuski's call for stronger gun-control laws. Good luck with that, Joe! But is this really the main problem that led to James Holmes shooting 70 people in 90 seconds in a movie theatre in Aurora, CO? Don't blame easy access to military battle equipment; blame the movie.

The Dark Knight Rises is just the latest in a disturbing trend in popular motion pictures. The problem is not the violence depicted on screen. There has been violence on screen since Thomas Edison's Great Train Robbery. The problem is a level of unreality that is becoming more and more commonplace in today's movies. The Dark Knight, The Avengers, Avatar, The Hunger Games, Spider-Man, Transformers, Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, Iron Man, The Twilight Saga.... Movie goers are increasingly being brought into worlds that have little or no association with real life. They are, in effect, psychosis illustrated.

There's escapism and then there's escapism. Movies have always been a great way for viewers to forget their problems and enter another world for a while. But movies, and before them stage plays going back to the ancient Greeks, most often grounded their presentations with people and places that seemed familiar to the average viewer. Stories were played out in settings that ordinary people could identify with in their daily lives. Elements of the fantastic might enter into the story—from the deus ex machina of Greek tragedy to the 100-yard-square Broadway stages of Busby Berkeley to the gadgets of James Bond—but people, places, and situations more often than not were recognizable in reality.

Beyond escapism, movies and plays actually perform a useful social function as well. They are vehicles for conveying a society's moral and ethical standards to the audience, who may then learn from the depictions of familiar characters struggling with familiar issues and apply those lessons in their actual day-to-day lives. The current crop of unreality-based movies still have moral and ethical messages, but these (continued in right column)

(continued from left column) moral and ethical examples seem to function only in worlds of utter fantasy. Ask your garden-variety psycho—or better yet their psychiatrist—if they have strong moral and ethical stances, except that they only function in a mind dissociated from the real world.

The famous line from Wes Craven's Scream "Movies don't create psychos. Movies make psychos more creative," was spoken in reference to the horror genre. In horror movies life is disturbed by unreal elements. The unreal element must be destroyed in order for society to return to its normal balance. But The Dark Knight Rises and its ilk begin in an unreal element and never leave, rendering the viewer like Sam Lowry at the end of Brazil: forced into a fantasy world in his mind that he dare not leave.

These movies don't do anyone any good. And a few people, like James Holmes, take their invitation to leave the real world and enter permanently a place where shooting a pregnant woman through the spine and killing her six-year-old daughter are just part of the fantasy.

And to anyone who takes this position of the Police Gazette's as uncharacteristically conservative, keep in mind it has nothing to do with levels of violence, gore, brutality, amorality, etc. and everything to do with having those things depicted cartoonishly as opposed to realistically. Maybe Heath Ledger's performance as the Joker in the first Dark Knight was quite good like people say. We don't know. Given the vehicle in which he acted it seems to us any one of a hundred actors could have done equally as well at such a black and white, two-dimensional character. So movies don't create psychos; some movies just make some psychos so fed up they have to act.

CORRESPONDENCE

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Welcome To the City
from Another Universe
Let the Police Gazette Be Your Guide

This special issue of the National Police Gazette pre-empted many of our regular features so that we can bring you the official 2012 Police Gazette Binghamton Business Map and its index. These take up all of pages 4 through 6 and are your guide to the places in central Binghamton where you can get your provisions and find things to do. It's designed with downtown residents in mind—not least the hundreds of new residents moving into the just opened student housing buildings—as well as visitors who may have thought at least once "Go to downtown Binghamton? Are you kidding!?" The map highlights 123 businesses, a majority within walking distance of the new student housing. So there's no excuse; there's something for everyone!

Our regular features return next month. In the meantime, be sure to read "An Illustrated Journal..." on the next page. We can't think of a better reintroduction to your National Police Gazette!

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