

FOREWORD

Like Brian Godawa, I too love movies. I love the emotional journey that movies take me on. So different from books or music or theatre or art, all of which bring me joy or sadness or excitement, movies involve my senses and my thinking in a way that allows me to escape or go deeper into a place than I ever thought possible.

As a producer and lover of movies for many years now, and as a follower of Christ, I have not found many places where both of these “loves” can intersect (or collide sometimes). And not many places where deep dialogue can happen on postmodernism and Indiana Jones. Maybe that is why Brian and I became fast friends and why I like this book so much.

Hollywood and the study of the entertainment business, and its impact on our culture, has no lack of commentators. Brian makes his case for understanding the world of movies in a clear and easy way, and he has detailed his argument with many examples from movies. The wealth of examples not only enriches the reading but makes me realize that we have an embarrassment of rich movies and journeys to enjoy.

Reading this book is actually somewhat frustrating since I keep want-

ing to stop and rewatch the movies he references. That's because, whether or not I agree with his interpretation of any particular movie, he challenges me to go deeper—which only makes me love movies even more.

As an accomplished screenwriter, Brian gives a unique commentary to this subject. He knows how to tell a story and how to create a structure and flow to the writing. I find this book to be scholarly—it is well researched and documented like a textbook, but also approachable and readable. I just like to keep Wikipedia handy on those philosophy chapters. And for full disclosure, Brian has worked for me as a screenwriter. I love not only his skills as a writer but also his skill as a working “reporter” on what we filmmakers do and what it means. We continue to kick around ideas for future movies together.

It is interesting to make movies and then hear others talk about what the movie is about. As filmmakers, it is sometimes shocking and sometimes laughable to hear what reviewers say—too much analysis or misguided agendas or just over thinking can produce movie reviews that are way off. But sometimes a reviewer's comments can be startlingly insightful. That is what I find in reading this book—Brian's insights on how to see various movies keep me wanting more, tracking down more, watching more, enjoying more films.

Brian suggests that a good sermon is like a good movie. And for me, both must have three things: great content, flawless structure and some kind of engaging style.

I get asked two questions as a movie producer. First, what is a producer? (There are many books on this, and there's too much to say here.) And second, usually while working on a movie, I get asked, what is the movie about? Content is important to an audience—not that they want to hear a lesson or a sermon, but they want to know the narrative, what is the story? Is it worth my time? Will I enjoy it?

Developing movies at the studio is usually a process about the structure and the style, not about the content. The writer thinks deeply about this (usually) and so do the principal players (actors, director, producer) since that is how you are going to transmit the story.

But very few reflect about their own worldview or the roots of why this story is going to be told in this way. It just comes out in their art.

Brian's skill is helping us to view those underpinnings, to see how the story is built and how it impacts our larger cultural thinking. It is a fascinating process—what comes out of our movies that we can't control but describes who we are inside.

I hope that Brian updates this book every several years, or that we can talk him into a website or blog that applies this kind of thinking to the current crop of summer movies or Academy nominees. I taught a Sunday school class where we examined the Best Picture nominees against some of these same principles. It was the best attended class at the church—who doesn't want a homework assignment of watching some movies and then coming to class with the Bible to see if we can figure out what it all means. Well now you have no excuse—Brian provides the questions and topics at the end of each chapter.

I hope you enjoy the book as much as I do.

Ralph Winter

Producer (*X-Men*, *Fantastic Four*, *Wolverine*)