

a movie theatre is no place for texting!!

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Do those in charge of making and distributing and exhibiting motion pictures no longer want me to go to the movies any longer? It sure seems like it, or at least that looks to be the direction they're moving in after reports came out of CinemaCon yesterday that a debate was raised over the possibility of allowing texting to take place inside of movie theatres in the future without repercussion. Now my first reaction to this whole discussion has always been "I thought people go to the movies to actually watch the movie, not take phone calls, tweet, check emails or hop on their Facebook," but apparently there are some who think that perspective is @*#& and are looking to drive me away for the self-important and discourteous who might then replace my dollars at the box office by tenfold or some other ridiculous multiple.

During a panel about industry issues, it was brought up on more than one occasion that perhaps allowing texting is the way to go to combat the slouching attendance. Sony Pictures Entertainment's Jeff Blake whined that 20 years ago, "kids would come every week." Yeah, I know... I was one of those kids. I was also one of those teenagers, one of those young adults, one of those 20-somethings who loved going to the movies so much, who found it to be such a magical experience, who had it has their vice that I would usually go to the movies every weekend, to see whatever was playing. I've seen plenty of good, plenty of bad and plenty of in-between, but, as far as the studios and the theatres are concerned, I was frequenting their business period. Therefore, I think I'm qualified to say as a regular patron that they've lost their @*#& minds in thinking that allowing texts is going to help regain the audiences they've been losing with

regularity. Prior to cell phones, the biggest issue you had to concern yourself with at the movies was some loud mouth incapable of shutting the @*#& up for a couple of hours, but usually a few well-placed Shhh's from various members of the audience would take care of that. If needed, a visit to the lobby to get a manager or usher would then resolve such an issue. However, now with everyone having so much access to the outside world in the palm of their hands, the deterioration of common courtesy has accelerated over the past couple of years. Come to think of it, I wouldn't care if you felt the need to send a text during the couple of hours you're supposed to be escaping from your normal and mundane life if you could do so without your Smartphone lighting up the whole damn theatre brighter than the movie itself. But you can't. No matter how much you try to reduce the shine on your luminous phone, there is no way for you to do it without distracting those around you. And that's where those putting texting on the table just don't seem to get it. The movie is supposed to be the distraction, not the movie-goers.



Regal Entertainment CEO Amy Miles mused "I'm concerned that the movie-going experience isn't

just for baby boomers." She also speculated "if we had a movie that appealed to a younger demographic, we could test some of these concepts," confessing that 21 JUMP STREET was talked about by those at Regal for relaxed cell phone standards. "You're trying to figure out if there's something you can offer in the theater that I would not find appealing but my 18-year-old son might," she added. Well, Amy, let me offer up a counter to your argument. I'm concerned that the movie-going experience isn't just for @*#&.



I'm becoming more and more concerned that the movie-going experience isn't just for those who only care about themselves with no regard for anyone else's right to enjoy their experience as well. I'm also a little bit concerned that my age demographic is now going to dictate what I can and can't see, because God forbid my old @*#& wants to see something like 21 JUMP STREET or something else marketed to the youngsters... I won't be able to unless I want to deal with all the obstacles that'll come with it.

However, leave it to Greg Foster from IMAX to be the icing on the cake. His 17-year-old son always has his phone on him... I guess that makes him special from the rest of the population that also does, but Foster's theory on the matter is this: "We want them to pay \$12 to \$14 to come into an auditorium and watch a movie. But they've become accustomed to controlling their own existence." He also believes they may "feel a little handcuffed" by not being able to use their phones during a movie. Good!! They're supposed

to feel handcuffed. It's a rule that's been established for the greater good for the greatest number of people... not just for your kid. I guess people might feel a little handcuffed by their ability to just walk into a bank and take whatever money they want, too, regardless of whether or not it belongs to them, but guess what? That's the rule, unless you want to take the chance of winding up in handcuffs. Maybe it's my abundance of common sense, but I'm not seeing why anyone would want to cater to this particular crowd, when the majority of people who do follow the rules on not using your cell phone during a movie also have \$12 to \$14 they're willing to pay for a few hours of entertainment.

I asked my friend just the other day about the use of cell phones in a movie, and he guesstimated that during a film, on average, there's probably 20-30 instances of people taking out their phone. Now, with a sold-out house of about 400, that's a fraction of the overall population watching a movie. Therefore, why would those who exhibit that type of behavior be the clientele you're looking to build on?

Tim League, the cinematic hero of the Alamo Drafthouse (in Austin, TX), spoke up against these texting ideas, and sadly seemed to be in the minority. Yeah, his chain is smaller than those of Regal or AMC, so clearly what does he know? He only operates the chain that everyone who actually enjoys movies wishes their chain could be like. "Over my dead body will I introduce texting into the movie theater. I love the idea of playing around with a new concept. But that is the scourge of our industry," he explained. "It's our job to understand that this is a sacred space and we have to teach manners." Do we honestly live in the Magnited States of America? How could this be the only dissenting opinion?



I'm lucky enough that I don't have to pay to see movies. As a member of the press, I'm shown the films by the studios for review. However, in the off chance that I've missed something or could not attend something that was set-up, it's gone for me and not coming back. I won't make the time or the effort to make up for my loss, because it isn't worth the aggravation. The last few times I either had to get up to search for a theatre manager who's impossible to find to hopefully take care of the problem for me, at which point I've already missed a nice chunk of the flick, or loudly bellow "Turn your phone off!!" with the goal that my public embarrassment might be enough to inform such party that they're being incredibly rude. But why would I pay for an experience I know will be less than ideal? And there's your problem, movie industry. You continue to look for ways to gain from the less than ideal rather than improving with the mind sight of being ideal once again. Did you ever stop and think that maybe the reason people aren't coming to the movies on a weekly basis anymore (besides the economy) is you? The ticket prices, the under lit screens, the concession prices, your lack of desire to deal with talkers or texters... these are the reasons people don't want to come back. Would you want to go back to a restaurant where you had a terrible experience? Of course not, and the same holds for the movies. Oh, sure, you might make an exception for something you really want to see, but there's a reason your attendance is down. People don't want to come back repeatedly to endure the headache. Fix those issues, and maybe you'll be onto something. Otherwise, don't come @*#& to me in the future when the movie-going experience is in peril, because the only customers you're

attracting are those who aren't even there to watch the movie. That's no type of business model that can possibly sustain itself. Eventually, they'll learn they cannot pay attention to the movie and do other things with their time without having to pay admission. You need those who are paying because of the service you're offering to stick around.



I believe John McClane summed this up best - "if you're not a part of the solution, you're a part of the problem. Quit being a part of the @*#& problem and put the other guy back on!" Tim League, you were saying...

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