

A Guide to Scoring and Writing Reviews

A script is someone's child. It was born with an idea in the writer's head and it was raised with every word the author laid down on the page. It is rarely easy and like all good parents, writers have high hopes for their children.

After you read a script, you have a gut reaction, love or hate. While it might be interesting to share those thoughts, telling a writer you like or don't like his/her work is not in itself very helpful.

Instead, pointing out specific story elements, characters, dialogue, or action, gives a writer something to work with and improve upon. Don't try to rewrite the story in your own style. Instead, try to think of the writer's intentions and if possible, offer suggestions to help him/her better achieve them.

This is much harder than it sounds.

At times, you might be confronted with a story that challenges your views or offers up characters you don't like. For example, you might be reading a horror story that disgusts you or a political satire that offends you. While you should share your reaction, you should also keep in mind that the author's goal might have been to disgust and offend. The real question is, how well did they do telling *their* story.

Unlike parents, who aim to raise happy and healthy children, writers sometimes purposefully give birth to clowns, victims, and monsters.

You don't have to like a story to see the beauty in it. Once you realize this, as a reviewer, it is actually quite freeing.

We are helping each other be the best we can be. We are helping each other grow our craft. But we are not a chorus. We should be helping each other develop our own *unique* voice.

When it comes time to score the script, you are not simply saying, this is how much I love or hate this story. You are doing your best to judge the craft of the script.

You are helping them get their child ready for the world.

As a bonus, I think you'll find as you become better at giving reviews, you will become a better writer.

Chris Messineo
MoviePoet.com

p.s. During the voting month, you can review the scores and comments you have left and make changes. It is not uncommon to have second thoughts and new insights.