

Going to the movies: new meanings

Dennis C. R. Estrada (08/06/19)

There was once a "magical" experience of "going to the movies", as Georges Méliès would have made it visible, or as "the Goonies" would have tirelessly demonstrated. Magic is real now. So even going to the movies became daunting.

Is it fair to blame the rise of takeover franchises and the consumer fervor sparked by this industry? Perhaps we should first stop to analyze the meaning of what that experience meant, and try to understand what it could mean now: Going to the movies didn't just mean watching a movie on a big screen alongside a mass of inconsiderate people, munching on popcorn in unison. Paradoxically, there was another search in all this torture, which seemed to me paradoxically magical. I know it had nothing to do with the subjective quality of the movies I watched, because there were so many bad things that were good for being bad and the enthusiasm was still the same. So it wasn't going in that direction either. Perhaps the search itself ended up becoming boring or perhaps the new meaning no longer depended on why people wanted to go to the movies, but on: what for?

Or there are no other alternatives?

Let me just briefly mention two of these outstanding options below, to return to the topic of my premise...

FILM FESTIVALS: There are now for all tastes, communities, distances and economies. Some with greater international capacity in their programming, others more inclusive. There are those which - because they don't charge - don't fill rooms and those which, because they charge a lot, run out. The problem with the latter is that many people confuse the idea of going to a film festival with going to a mall. It is not the same to choose between "Captain Marvel" and "Alita" to make time; nor go out to see the national film out of national commitment. A film festival is much more than that, but again: why should people go? The experience of following a film festival is not just about prizes and guests, but about acquiring control of the magic that in the past we were biased to compromise with our reality. I personally don't follow as many festivals as I'd like, but once I find myself inside one, it's hard to stop feeling myself comfortably trapped. And on top of that I want to recommend them.

ONLINE PLATFORMS: Now, it is possible to confuse the benefits of an official streaming platform (Netflix, still at the top of the pyramid) with the so-called "piracy". Here the meaning of going to the cinema noticeably changes and allows the viewer to question their instincts. Isn't that valid also as a community experience of the audiovisual type? Or is it just magic?

So what does it mean to go to the movies now? I have shown that blaming companies for the alienated frivolity of their mechanisms and paralyzing emotion is not a strong argument. Searches always lead somewhere. Our cinema is no longer the exception. It is already known why the old formulas die without the climax meet the conclusion. So "why people should go to the movies?" depends on how each one translates their own expectations, especially for those who cannot continue living without magic.