

The Anatomy of Hits and Flops: Review analysis of IMDb's top and bottom-rated movies

Introduction

For my research project, I wanted to understand what makes a movie resonate with audiences or stand out in a bad way. My goal is to apply a computational method into a movie dataset and continue the analysis with qualitative methods to answer humanistic research questions. This research project aims to study the information offered by movie reviews to uncover the features that contribute to the success or failure of films across different genres. I have chosen to focus on movies presented in the popular online database IMDb, as it is known as a place where users leave reviews and ratings. I have located an IMDb movies dataset from the online database Kaggle, which I plan to use as the large subset for this study. Here are my precise research question for this project:

1. Which genres have the highest and lowest overall scores on IMDb?
2. Which movies are the top five in the highest ranked genre and which movies are the last five in the lowest ranked genre?
3. What makes the highest ranked movies of the best genre so good according to reviewers?
4. What makes the lowest ranked movies of the worst genre so bad according to reviewers?

I will first identify the highest and lowest ranked genres in IMDb. After I have done so, I will identify the top five highest rated movies from the highest genre and the last five rated movies from the lowest genre. To answer these questions, I will extract information from the dataset using Python Jupyter notebook and the Pandas and Seaborn libraries. I will also clean my data to only focus on movies published in 2020 or before, so that the movies have had time to accumulate reviews. Once I have identified these movies and answered the first research questions utilising

data cleaning and manipulation using Python, I will be able to move on to my third and fourth research questions. First, I will locate the most popular reviews from each movie from IMDb. I will do this manually, as reviews are not a part of the dataset. I will then analyse the reviews using qualitative methods. I will analyse the reviews with the help of the appraisal framework and content analysis.

These research questions are of interest in the humanistic fields of media studies and cinematography, especially due to my focus on linguistic, artistic, creative and storytelling aspects of the movies and their reviews. Through my analysis, I seek to provide key characteristics that contribute to a movie's success or failure. By understanding these characteristics and patterns, I can gain a deeper appreciation of the elements that make a movie memorable or forgettable. My research not only sheds light on the subjective nature of movie reviews but also offers a systematic approach to evaluating cinematic quality. Further, my research will be able to provide insight into the accuracy of the information and listings provided on the IMDb webpage.

Data cleaning and processing

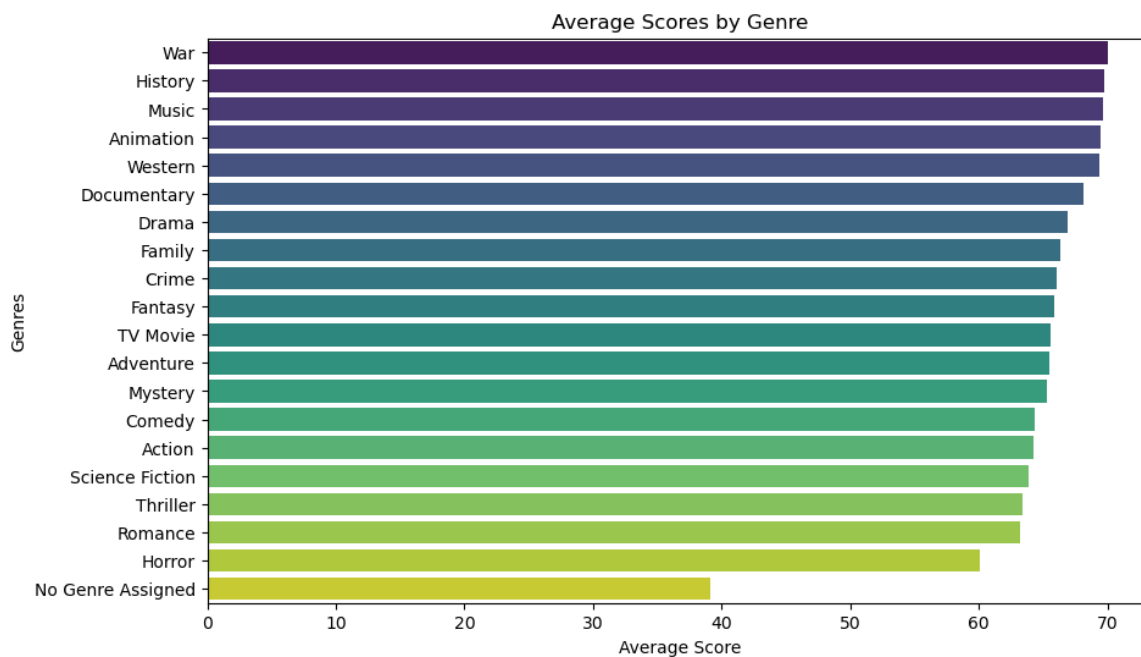
My project began with the acquisition of the IMDb movies dataset, which was downloaded as a zip file from Kaggle. Kaggle is an online platform that serves as a hub for data science and machine learning enthusiasts. I unzipped the file and opened the raw dataset in excel. The data is a csv file which consists of the names, publication dates, ratings, genres, overviews, crews, original titles, status, original languages, budget, revenues, and countries of over 10 000 movies. Then I imported the dataset as a csv file into a Python Jupyter Notebook. I imported the Pandas library in order to process and clean the dataset. This process involved filtering and sorting the data to pinpoint the top-rated genre and the lowest-rated genre. I also imported the Seaborn library with which I created the plot which showcases the results.

First after downloading the csv file into the Jupyter notebook, I imported the defaultdict from the collections library for simpler data manipulation. I imported pyplot from matplotlib in order to make a clear diagram of the average scores of the genres.

I filtered out the movies that have been published after 2020, so that the average ratings have had time to accumulate and therefore offer more accurate results. Then, I labelled the movies that did not have a genre assigned and removed unnecessary symbols from the genres of

movies that had multiple genres assigned. Then I grouped the genres with their respective scores, such that each genre of the movie is appointed the full score of the movie.

Now that each genre is associated with scores from each movie in that genre, I averaged the scores and grouped the genres with their average scores. Finally, these average scores of the genres are made into a Pandas data frame object and sorted for simpler presentation in a bar plot. The plot obtained using Pyplot and Seaborn shows the average scores of all the genres. The plot also shows that the most popular genre is 'War' and the least popular is 'Horror.'



Next, I want to find the top-rated movies of the best genre (war) and the worst rated movies of the worst genre (horror). This is done by filtering the movies in these genres from the original data and sorting them. The results are printed as shown in the following figure. The first column in the printed output is the index of the movie in the original dataset.

Top movies in the best genre (War):

| | names | score |
|------|------------------|-------|
| 1552 | Schindler's List | 86.0 |
| 1594 | The Pianist | 84.0 |
| 3687 | Come and See | 83.0 |
| 2445 | Apocalypse Now | 83.0 |
| 6247 | Paths of Glory | 83.0 |

Worst movies in the worst genre (Horror):

| | names | score |
|------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 2118 | Chinese Erotic Ghost Story | 20.0 |
| 6687 | I Spit on Your Grave: Déjà Vu | 30.0 |
| 7618 | Alone in the Dark | 33.0 |
| 8075 | Dracula 3D | 33.0 |
| 7535 | Children of the Living Dead | 34.0 |

As a final part of the computational data analysis, I wanted to find out the top-rated genre combination. Here, each genre combination assigned to a movie is considered an individual entity contrary to the above. For example, the score obtained by a movie with the genres comedy, drama and romance is not counted towards the score of the comedy genre alone. This analysis reveals that movies with the genres romance, animation and drama have the highest average score of 85. However, the main focus in this work is the ratings and reviews of individual genres.

Analysis of reviews

For my research questions related to analysing movie reviews to understand what makes the best films stand out and the worst ones fail, I have decided to use the appraisal framework alongside content analysis. These methods feel particularly suited to the task because they allow me to systematically examine both the subjective language used by reviewers and the recurring themes that emerge across reviews. I am basing my analysis on the appraisal framework on Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). My content analysis is based on Krippendorff's method (2019).

Martin and White's Appraisal Theory focuses on the linguistic resources used to express attitudes, emotions, and evaluations. It is particularly well-suited for analysing movie reviews because reviews are inherently evaluative texts. Appraisal Theory breaks down evaluative language into three main categories: affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect refers to the emotional responses expressed in the review, such as feelings of joy, sadness, or excitement.

Judgment involves the evaluation of characters' behaviours and moral qualities, often reflecting the reviewer's approval or disapproval of their actions. Appreciation focuses on the aesthetic and technical aspects of the film, such as cinematography, direction, and overall artistic quality. In movie reviews, affect can be recognized through emotional language and expressions of personal feelings, judgment through evaluative statements about characters and their actions, and appreciation through comments on the film's artistic and technical merits. By applying Appraisal Theory, I can systematically identify and categorize the evaluative language used in movie reviews, providing insights into the reviewers' attitudes and the persuasive strategies they employ.

The appraisal framework is rooted in systemic functional linguistics and provides tools for dissecting how people express their evaluations, emotions, and attitudes in text. This framework is perfect for analysing reviews because it helps me unpack the specific ways people praise or critique films. For instance, when reviewers use phrases like “heartwarming performances” or “clunky dialogue,” these evaluative choices reveal what elements they value or find lacking. By applying this framework, I can uncover consistent patterns in how the best movies evoke positive appreciation or avoid harsh judgments compared to the worst ones.

As for content analysis, Krippendorff's method offers a systematic and replicable approach to analysing textual data. It is well-suited for movie reviews because it allows me to quantify and categorize the content, making it possible to identify patterns and trends across a large dataset. Content analysis complements this linguistic approach by offering a way to categorize and quantify the textual data in reviews. Through this method, I can systematically identify recurring themes—like mentions of acting, plot, or special effects—and see how these topics differ between highly rated and poorly rated films. For example, if the worst movies consistently receive negative comments about pacing or character development, while the best ones are praised for originality or emotional impact, this will provide clear insights into what makes or breaks a film.

Content analysis is done by unitising, sampling and coding. First, I need to define the units of analysis, such as sentences, paragraphs, or entire reviews, to ensure consistency in the analysis process. For this project, I decided to focus on the complete reviews, including the headline, in order to gain a deeper understanding into a particular movie. This was crucial, because my sample is otherwise very small, and for comparing different reviews and identifying common themes. Secondly, I selected a representative sample of reviews which helps in generalizing the findings. I decided on one review from each movie, due to the limitations of this small-scale project. But, by analysing a diverse set of reviews, I wanted to capture a wide range of opinions and perspectives. Finally, I developed a manual coding scheme to categorize the content which allowed me to systematically analyse the reviews. I included themes such as plot, direction, and acting and

counted how many times they appeared in the reviews. This helped me in recognising which features are important in a movies' success as well as in grouping these themes into larger domains. The themes I included in the scheme and the number of instances can be found from the Appendix.

The methods of content analysis and the appraisal framework work well together because they balance detailed linguistic analysis with broader thematic pattern recognition. The appraisal framework provided a structured approach to evaluate the emotional and evaluative language used in the reviews. This method helped in identifying the affective terms, judgments, and appreciations expressed by the reviewers. Content analysis, on the other hand, focused on categorizing and quantifying the thematic elements mentioned in the reviews. By combining these two analytical methods, I aim to uncover the specific features that make the best movies stand out and the worst movies falter. By combining them, I will be able to identify the key factors driving positive and negative evaluations in movie reviews and make meaningful observations about what distinguishes great cinema from the forgettable.

I am conducting the analysis based on the previously extracted best movies from the highest ranked genre in IMDb and the worst movies from the lowest ranked genre on IMDb. The highest ranked genre was "war," and the lowest ranked genre was "horror." I specified the analysis by deciding to focus on movies that have been published in 2020 or earlier, so that they have had time to accumulate reviews and offer more accurate results because of that. I am focusing on ten movie reviews. The then reviews are split equally, five to the best movies from the highest ranked genre and five to the worst movies from the lowest ranked genre. I am analysing one review from each movie. I located the reviews from the IMDb webpage and the reviews I chose were the most popular, as in ranked the most useful and were at the top of the reviews list.

Next, I will be conducting an analysis of each review using the appraisal framework and content analysis. I will first present the review and then perform the analysis. I will start my analysis on the five reviews from the five best war-movies. After analysing each review, I will collect a summary in which I form patterns on the characteristics that made the movies in question so liked.

Part 1. Best of war

1. Schindler's List

Amazing!

This Movie was sensational. It was a piece of art along with being informational. It told people about the holocaust, and it also told people about the human spirit. It shows how people can just triumph over anything with just some help from one person The things that Spielberg did with the movie was incredible too. The black and white was genius, and how he had the little girl in red and the fire was phenomenal. I have never seen anything like it, Schindler's List is beyond all words.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer uses strong positive emotions to describe their experience with the film:

- "Amazing"
- "sensational"
- "incredible"
- "genius"
- "phenomenal"
- "beyond all words"

These terms indicate a deep admiration and emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer positively evaluates Spielberg's direction:

- "The things that Spielberg did with the movie was incredible."

This judgment highlights the director's skill and creativity.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's artistic and educational value:

- "It was a piece of art"
- "informational"
- "The black and white was genius"
- "the little girl in red and the fire was phenomenal"

These statements show the reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic merit and its ability to educate viewers about the Holocaust and the human spirit.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer emphasizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "It was a piece of art"
- "The black and white was genius"
- "the little girl in red and the fire was phenomenal"

Educational value:

-The film is noted for its educational impact:

- "informational"
- "It told people about the holocaust"

Human spirit:

-The reviewer highlights the film's portrayal of the human spirit:

- "It also told people about the human spirit"
- "It shows how people can just triumph over anything with just some help from one person"

Cinematic techniques:

-Spielberg's direction is praised for its innovative techniques:

- "The things that Spielberg did with the movie was incredible"
- "The black and white was genius"
- "the little girl in red and the fire was phenomenal"

By applying Martin and White's Appraisal Theory, I systematically identified and categorized the evaluative language used in the review. I focused on three main categories: affect, judgment, and appreciation. For affect, I noted the strong positive emotions expressed by the reviewer, such as "Amazing," "sensational," "incredible," "genius," "phenomenal," and "beyond all words." These terms indicate a deep admiration and emotional impact. For judgment, I highlighted the positive evaluation of Spielberg's direction, specifically the statement, "The things that Spielberg did with the movie was incredible." This judgment underscores the director's skill and creativity. For

appreciation, I identified the reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic and educational value, with phrases like "a piece of art," "informational," "The black and white was genius," and "the little girl in red and the fire was phenomenal."

Using Krippendorff's content analysis method, I quantified and categorized the content of the review into specific themes. I identified four main themes: artistic merit, educational value, human spirit, and cinematic techniques. For artistic merit, I noted the reviewer's emphasis on the film's artistic qualities, such as "a piece of art" and the praise for the black-and-white cinematography and selective colour use as "genius" and "phenomenal." For educational value, I highlighted the film's impact in informing viewers about the Holocaust, with statements like "informational" and "It told people about the holocaust." For human spirit, I focused on the reviewer's comments about the film's portrayal of the human spirit, such as "It also told people about the human spirit" and "It shows how people can just triumph over anything with just some help from one person." For cinematic techniques, I noted the praise for Spielberg's innovative direction, particularly the use of black-and-white cinematography and selective colour.

2. The pianist

Brilliantly Narrated, Visually Stunning!

Polanski has depicted the gory details of the holocaust without much restraint. But, the most wonderful aspect of the film is that the director has not lost focus of his story and instead of focusing too much on the holocaust horror he has weaved the true-life narrative of survival around devillish happenings. Every single act of escapade Szpilman goes through is depicted like a drop of water on a barren desert. However, the Oasis in the driest desert comes in the end and it is here that Polanski captures the essence of human emotion. I had this very strong urge of jumping into the theater screen and magically adopting a character in the movie and doing something about the helplessness portrayed so convincingly. Overall, Polanski has given a stunning visual narrative of the cold war. Survival indeed is a privilege though it is taken for granted today. Performances by Brody, Kretschmann deserve applause. Pawel Edelman's camera work is moving and he has brilliantly captured the dark sadness in the visual canvas in an effective way. The lighting is amazing. Pre-dawn shooting schedule could have helped a great deal. Hervé de Luze's editing work has ensured that the

narrative does not slip away from focus. Most notable is the scene where the human bodies are lit on fire and the camera raises to show the smoke. The darkness of the smoke is enhanced and is used effectively to fade the scene out. The scene where Brody's fingers move as he rests his hands on the bars of the tram handle only goes to show the brilliance of Polanski as a film-maker.

Great film that will be in the running for this year's Oscars. I will give it a 9 Out of 10.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong emotions and admiration for the film:

- "most wonderful aspect"
- "stunning visual narrative"
- "moving"
- "brilliantly captured"
- "amazing"
- "great film"
- "9 Out of 10"

These terms indicate a deep appreciation and emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer positively evaluates the director and actors:

- "Polanski has depicted the gory details of the holocaust without much restraint."
- "Polanski captures the essence of human emotion."
- "Performances by Brody, Kretschmann deserve applause."
- "Pawel Edelman's camera work is moving."
- "Hervé de Luze's editing work has ensured that the narrative does not slip away from focus."
- "The scene where Brody's fingers move as he rests his hands on the bars of the tram handle only goes to show the brilliance of Polanski as a film-maker."

These judgments highlight the director's skill, the actors' performances, and the technical crew's contributions.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's artistic and emotional value:

- "the most wonderful aspect of the film is that the director has not lost focus of his story"
- "Polanski has given a stunning visual narrative of the cold war."
- "Pawel Edelman's camera work is moving and he has brilliantly captured the dark sadness in the visual canvas in an effective way."
- "The lighting is amazing."
- "Hervé de Luze's editing work has ensured that the narrative does not slip away from focus."
- "The darkness of the smoke is enhanced and is used effectively to fade the scene out."

These statements show the reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic merit and its ability to evoke strong emotions.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer emphasizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "stunning visual narrative"
- "Pawel Edelman's camera work is moving and he has brilliantly captured the dark sadness in the visual canvas in an effective way."
- "The lighting is amazing."
- "Hervé de Luze's editing work has ensured that the narrative does not slip away from focus."
- "The darkness of the smoke is enhanced and is used effectively to fade the scene out."

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's ability to evoke strong emotions:

- "Polanski captures the essence of human emotion."
- "I had this very strong urge of jumping into the theater screen and magically adopting a character in the movie and doing something about the helplessness portrayed so convincingly."

Narrative focus:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's focus on the true-life narrative of survival:

- "the most wonderful aspect of the film is that the director has not lost focus of his story and instead of focusing too much on the holocaust horror he has weaved the true-life narrative of survival around devillish happenings."

- "Every single act of escapade Szpilman goes through is depicted like a drop of water on a barren desert."
- "However, the Oasis in the driest desert comes in the end and it is here that Polanski captures the essence of human emotion."

Technical excellence:

-The reviewer praises the technical aspects of the film:

- "Pawel Edelman's camera work is moving and he has brilliantly captured the dark sadness in the visual canvas in an effective way."
- "The lighting is amazing."
- "Pre-dawn shooting schedule could have helped a great deal."
- "Hervé de Luze's editing work has ensured that the narrative does not slip away from focus."
- "The scene where Brody's fingers move as he rests his hands on the bars of the tram handle only goes to show the brilliance of Polanski as a film-maker."

I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong emotions and admiration expressed, such as "most wonderful aspect" and "stunning visual narrative," indicate a deep appreciation and emotional impact. Positive evaluations of the director, actors, and technical crew underscore their skill and contributions. The reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic and emotional value is evident in phrases like "the most wonderful aspect of the film is that the director has not lost focus of his story" and "Polanski has given a stunning visual narrative of the cold war."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, narrative focus, and technical excellence. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's artistic qualities, ability to evoke strong emotions, focus on the true-life narrative of survival, and praise for the technical aspects provide a comprehensive understanding of the film's positive reception. My approach allowed me to understand the reviewer's attitudes, persuasive strategies, and the thematic content that makes Polanski's film highly praised.

3. Come and See

Jaw-droppingly powerful and truly disturbing Russian war drama.

"Come and See" has to be one of the most powerful war movies ever made. It left me emotionally drained. The film tells the story of 12-year-old Florya (Alexi Kravchenko), whose desire is to join his countrymen in the battle against the fascists. His enthusiasm is written all over his face: in the opening scenes, which show Florya's recruitment by partisan soldiers, he wears the blissed-out smile of a hopeful child. After a bombardment, which leaves him temporarily deaf, he is left behind and stumbles across Glasha (Olga Mironova), who has also been abandoned. Together they return to his village, the atrocities witnessed there anticipating horrors to come. "Come and See" is a deeply unsettling film. It's hallucinatory, hellish, traumatizing and uncompromising. There's an aura of profound sadness here, as Florya ages dramatically over the course of the story's events. The film's most disturbing sequence revolves around the raising of one village and the slaughter of most of its inhabitants. The acting is excellent, the cinematography is stunning and the use of Mozart on the soundtrack is particularly effective. 10 out of 10. A must-see!

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong emotions and admiration for the film:

- "Jaw-droppingly powerful"
- "truly disturbing"
- "emotionally drained"
- "deeply unsettling"
- "hallucinatory, hellish, traumatizing and uncompromising"
- "profound sadness"
- "stunning"
- "particularly effective"
- "10 out of 10"
- "A must-see"

These terms indicate a deep emotional impact and appreciation for the film.

Judgment:

-The reviewer positively evaluates the actors and director:

- "The acting is excellent"
- "The cinematography is stunning"
- "The use of Mozart on the soundtrack is particularly effective"

These judgments highlight the skill and creativity of the actors and the director.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's artistic and emotional value:

- "one of the most powerful war movies ever made"
- "The film tells the story of 12-year-old Florya"
- "Florya's recruitment by partisan soldiers"
- "the atrocities witnessed there anticipating horrors to come"
- "Florya ages dramatically over the course of the story's events"
- "The film's most disturbing sequence revolves around the raising of one village and the slaughter of most of its inhabitants"

These statements show the reviewer's appreciation for the film's narrative and its ability to evoke strong emotions.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer emphasizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "The acting is excellent"
- "The cinematography is stunning"
- "The use of Mozart on the soundtrack is particularly effective"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's ability to evoke strong emotions:

- "Jaw-droppingly powerful"
- "truly disturbing"
- "emotionally drained"
- "deeply unsettling"

- "hallucinatory, hellish, traumatizing and uncompromising"
- "profound sadness"
- "10 out of 10"
- "A must-see"

Narrative focus:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's focus on the true-life narrative of survival:

- "The film tells the story of 12-year-old Florya"
- "Florya's recruitment by partisan soldiers"
- "the atrocities witnessed there anticipating horrors to come"
- "Florya ages dramatically over the course of the story's events"
- "The film's most disturbing sequence revolves around the raising of one village and the slaughter of most of its inhabitants"

I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong emotions and admiration expressed, such as "Jaw-droppingly powerful" and "truly disturbing," indicate a deep emotional impact and appreciation for the film. Positive evaluations of the actors and director underscore their skill and creativity. The reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic and emotional value is evident in phrases like "one of the most powerful war movies ever made" and "The film tells the story of 12-year-old Florya."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and narrative focus. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's artistic qualities, ability to evoke strong emotions, and focus on the true-life narrative of survival provide a comprehensive understanding of the film's positive reception. This approach allowed me to understand the reviewer's attitudes, persuasive strategies, and the thematic content that makes "Come and See" a praised movie.

4. Apocalypse Now

One of the best and most important movies ever

This movie changed the art of film making, telling a complex story in a powerful new way. It's a damn beautiful film. The mood, as they slowly drift up the Vietnamese river, keeps building and building and you can smell the heat and wetness in the air, feel the sweat dripping down your back, hear the hollow echoing screaming around you. The film mixes brutal realism with fantasy, intercutting a modern war with strange scenes full of technicolour smoke. The film uses music not as a score laid in later, but as a practical part of the scene playing from speakers, radios etc. Coppola uses a classic piece of literature as inspiration, taking scenes and characters, and putting them into entirely different surroundings. That is a tricky and brave thing to do. Then he takes a superstar, Brando, pays him a fortune, and films him so that you can barely see his face. The pure guts that such a move requires is astounding, and it works beautifully. This movie belongs in the top ten.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong emotions and admiration for the film:

- "One of the best and most important movies ever"
- "changed the art of film making"
- "a damn beautiful film"
- "astounding"
- "works beautifully"
- "belongs in the top ten"

These terms indicate a deep appreciation and emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer positively evaluates the director and actors:

- "Coppola uses a classic piece of literature as inspiration, taking scenes and characters, and putting them into entirely different surroundings. That is a tricky and brave thing to do."
- "Then he takes a superstar, Brando, pays him a fortune, and films him so that you can barely see his face. The pure guts that such a move requires is astounding, and it works beautifully."

These judgments highlight the director's skill, creativity, and boldness.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's artistic and emotional value:

- "telling a complex story in a powerful new way"
- "The mood, as they slowly drift up the Vietnamese river, keeps building and building and you can smell the heat and wetness in the air, feel the sweat dripping down your back, hear the hollow echoing screaming around you."
- "The film mixes brutal realism with fantasy, intercutting a modern war with strange scenes full of technicolour smoke."
- "The film uses music not as a score laid in later, but as a practical part of the scene playing from speakers, radios etc."

These statements show the reviewer's appreciation for the film's narrative, atmosphere, and innovative use of music.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer emphasizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "a damn beautiful film"
- "The film mixes brutal realism with fantasy, intercutting a modern war with strange scenes full of technicolour smoke."
- "The film uses music not as a score laid in later, but as a practical part of the scene playing from speakers, radios etc."

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's ability to evoke strong emotions:

- "One of the best and most important movies ever"
- "changed the art of film making"
- "astounding"
- "works beautifully"
- "belongs in the top ten"

Narrative focus:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's focus on the true-life narrative of survival:

- "telling a complex story in a powerful new way"
- "The mood, as they slowly drift up the Vietnamese river, keeps building and building and you can smell the heat and wetness in the air, feel the sweat dripping down your back, hear the hollow echoing screaming around you."
- "Coppola uses a classic piece of literature as inspiration, taking scenes and characters, and putting them into entirely different surroundings. That is a tricky and brave thing to do."
- "Then he takes a superstar, Brando, pays him a fortune, and films him so that you can barely see his face. The pure guts that such a move requires is astounding, and it works beautifully."

I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong emotions and admiration expressed, such as "One of the best and most important movies ever" and "changed the art of film making," indicate a deep emotional impact and appreciation for the film. Positive evaluations of the director and actors underscore their skill, creativity, and boldness. The reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic and emotional value is evident in phrases like "telling a complex story in a powerful new way" and "The mood, as they slowly drift up the Vietnamese river, keeps building and building."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and narrative focus. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's artistic qualities, ability to evoke strong emotions, and focus on the true-life narrative of survival provide a comprehensive understanding of the film's positive reception. This approach allowed me to understand the reviewer's attitudes, persuasive strategies, and the thematic content that makes Coppola's film one of the most praised "war" movies.

5. Paths of Glory

Hard-hitting anti-war movie

PATHS OF GLORY is a typically powerful anti-war movie from director Stanley Kubrick, starring Kirk Douglas in one of his most mature roles. The setting is WWI and the film follows the French army as they attempt to defend and retaliate against a massive German bombardment. Conflict comes

from the machinations of an over-zealous officer who is determined to see success achieved at all costs, no matter the casualties taken along the way. An ensemble of fine performances, taut direction and an intelligent script all combine to make one of the hardest-hitting war movies out there.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong emotions and admiration for the film:

- "typically powerful"
- "one of his most mature roles"
- "fine performances"
- "taut direction"
- "intelligent script"
- "one of the hardest-hitting war movies out there"

These terms indicate a deep appreciation and emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer positively evaluates the director and actors:

- "Stanley Kubrick, starring Kirk Douglas in one of his most mature roles"
- "Conflict comes from the machinations of an over-zealous officer who is determined to see success achieved at all costs, no matter the casualties taken along the way."

These judgments highlight the director's skill and the actors' performances.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's artistic and emotional value:

- "a typically powerful anti-war movie"
- "The setting is WW1 and the film follows the French army as they attempt to defend and retaliate against a massive German bombardment."
- "An ensemble of fine performances, taut direction and an intelligent script all combine to make one of the hardest-hitting war movies out there."

These statements show the reviewer's appreciation for the film's narrative, atmosphere, and overall impact.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer emphasizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "fine performances"
- "taut direction"
- "intelligent script"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's ability to evoke strong emotions:

- "typically powerful"
- "one of the hardest-hitting war movies out there"

Narrative focus:

-The reviewer appreciates the film's focus on the true-life narrative of survival:

- "The setting is WW1 and the film follows the French army as they attempt to defend and retaliate against a massive German bombardment."
- "Conflict comes from the machinations of an over-zealous officer who is determined to see success achieved at all costs, no matter the casualties taken along the way."

I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong emotions and admiration expressed, such as "typically powerful" and "one of the hardest-hitting war movies out there," indicate a deep emotional impact and appreciation for the film. Positive evaluations of the director and actors underscore their skill and performances. The reviewer's appreciation for the film's artistic and emotional value is evident in phrases like "a typically powerful anti-war movie" and "An ensemble of fine performances, taut direction and an intelligent script."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: Artistic Merit, Emotional Impact, and Narrative Focus. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's artistic qualities, ability to evoke strong emotions, and focus on the true-life narrative of survival provide a

comprehensive understanding of the film's positive reception. This approach allowed me to understand the reviewer's attitudes, persuasive strategies, and the thematic content that makes "Paths of Glory" highly praised.

Summary on my findings of the characteristics of the best reviewed war-movies

The reviews of the best movies highlighted several key features that contributed to their positive reception. The most prominent of these features included artistic merit, innovative cinematic techniques, strong emotional impact, skilled direction, powerful performances, and compelling themes.

Artistic merit

The artistic value of these films is a recurring theme in the reviews. For instance, "Schindler's List" was described as a "piece of art," while "The Pianist" was praised for its "stunning visual narrative." Similarly, "Apocalypse Now" was noted for changing "the art of film making" and being a "damn beautiful film." The reviewers consistently emphasized the films' artistic achievements, which contributed significantly to their high regard.

Cinematic techniques

Innovative and effective use of cinematography, lighting, and music was another common feature. In "Schindler's List," the use of black and white, with selective colour, is described as "genius" and "phenomenal." "The Pianist" is applauded for its moving camera work and amazing lighting. "Come and See" was noted for its stunning cinematography and effective use of Mozart on the soundtrack. "Apocalypse Now" was praised for its mix of brutal realism with fantasy and the practical use of music within scenes. These innovative techniques enhance the visual and auditory experience, making the films stand out.

Emotional impact

The strong emotional impact of these films is a significant factor in their positive reception. Reviewers described "Come and See" as "jaw-droppingly powerful" and "emotionally drained," while "Schindler's List" is said to be "beyond all words." "The Pianist" captures the essence of human emotion, and "Apocalypse Now" creates a mood that allows viewers to "smell the heat and

wetness in the air." The ability of these films to evoke deep emotions and connect with viewers on an emotional level seems to be a key aspect of their success.

Skilled direction

The directors' skills were highly praised across the reviews. Steven Spielberg's direction in "Schindler's List" was described as "incredible," while Roman Polanski's work in "The Pianist" was noted for its focus and restraint. Francis Ford Coppola's direction in "Apocalypse Now" was highlighted for its bravery and innovation, and Stanley Kubrick's direction in "Paths of Glory" was praised for its tautness and intelligence. The directors' ability to tell complex stories and evoke strong emotions is a crucial factor in the film.

Powerful performances

The acting performances in these films are consistently praised. Adrien Brody and Thomas Kretschmann's performances in "The Pianist" were pointed out, while the acting in "Come and See" was described as excellent. Kirk Douglas's role in "Paths of Glory" was noted as one of his most mature, and Marlon Brando's performance in "Apocalypse Now" was highlighted for its subtlety and impact. These powerful performances bring the characters to life and contribute to the films' overall impact.

Compelling themes

Further, themes of human resilience, survival, and the harsh realities of war were prevalent in all these reviews. "Schindler's List" and "The Pianist" both address the Holocaust and the human spirit's triumph over adversity. "Come and See" and "Paths of Glory" focus on the brutal realities of war, while "Apocalypse Now" explores the complexities of the Vietnam War. These compelling themes resonated deeply with the reviewers and added depth to the films' narratives.

In summary, the best-reviewed movies were highly regarded for their artistic merit, innovative cinematic techniques, strong emotional impact, skilled direction, powerful performances, and compelling themes. These features contributed to the films' positive reception and made them stand out.

Part 2. Worst of horror

Next, I will be analysing the worst five movies from the lowest ranked genre, horror. I will again first present the review and then conduct the analysis. Afterwards, I will summarise the key characteristics, which made these movies bad according to viewers.

1. Chinese erotic ghost stories

Unfunny

This is essentially the joke of the farmers daughter stretched to 90 minutes. For my taste thats 89 minutes too long. Think of it as a good looking sex comedy that isn't really funny or sexy. Clearly its suppose to be and many of the cast mug shamelessly, in the hopes of getting a laugh or disrobe in the hopes of getting a rise out of the audience unfortunately its all for naught, little of this film actually works, or works in such away that is interesting to watch. Honestly I picked this up thinking this was "An Erotic Ghost Story" which I had heard is pretty good. Clearly I'll have to make sure I get the right name next time. Pass this one up, its just a waste of time.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction with the film:

- "Unfunny"
- "89 minutes too long"
- "isn't really funny or sexy"
- "all for naught"
- "a waste of time"

These terms indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer negatively evaluates the cast and the film's execution:

- "many of the cast mug shamelessly"
- "little of this film actually works"

- "works in such a way that is interesting to watch"

These judgments highlight the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness of the cast and the film's execution.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic and technical aspects:

- "the joke of the farmers daughter stretched to 90 minutes"
- "good looking sex comedy that isn't really funny or sexy"
- "a waste of time"

These statements show the reviewer's lack of appreciation for the film's artistic and technical value.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "the joke of the farmers daughter stretched to 90 minutes"
- "good looking sex comedy that isn't really funny or sexy"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's negative emotional impact:

- "Unfunny"
- "89 minutes too long"
- "a waste of time"

Technical aspects:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's technical aspects:

- "many of the cast mug shamelessly"
- "little of this film actually works"
- "works in such a way that is interesting to watch"

In analysing this review, I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction

expressed, such as "Unfunny" and "a waste of time," indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact. Negative evaluations of the cast and the film's execution underscore the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness. The reviewer's criticism of the film's artistic and technical aspects is evident in phrases like "the joke of the farmers daughter stretched to 90 minutes" and "good looking sex comedy that isn't really funny or sexy."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and technical aspects. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's lack of artistic qualities, negative emotional impact, and poor technical aspects provides a comprehensive understanding of the film's negative reception.

2. I spit on your grave: Déjà vu

I spit on this film

This has got to be a contender for the worst sequel of all time title. I was so looking forward to this as I really enjoyed the first one all those years ago and was interested in seeing where Jennifer Hills character ended up after the first movie. But whoah! I didn't expect this dross. I've no idea who this is even aimed at, it's not shocking or graphic, it's so badly written and poorly acted and is full of some of the most awful characters ever put onto film. Maria Olsen's character is so weird and over the top that she ruins every scene she's in. There's countless scenes where people just turn up at the right place and time to push the film onto the next scene, almost as if they have psychic powers and teleportation devices. (Oh look, our main protagonist just ran off into a massive forest and within seconds runs straight into the bad guys who are standing around at the exact spot for her to run into, what a coincidence) The film rolls in at nearly TWO AND A HALF HOURS and there's a reason for this. Countless scenes of things that should last a few seconds like a character raking up leaves that go on for minutes at a time. Scenes of dialogue that just go on and on without ever adding to the story etc etc

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction with the film:

- "I spit on this film"
- "worst sequel of all time"
- "dross"
- "badly written and poorly acted"
- "most awful characters ever put onto film"
- "ruins every scene"
- "countless scenes"
- "a waste of time"

These terms indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer negatively evaluates the cast and the film's execution:

- "Maria Olsen's character is so weird and over the top that she ruins every scene she's in"
- "badly written and poorly acted"
- "countless scenes where people just turn up at the right place and time to push the film onto the next scene"

These judgments highlight the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness of the cast and the film's execution.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic and technical aspects:

- "not shocking or graphic"
- "badly written and poorly acted"
- "full of some of the most awful characters ever put onto film"
- "countless scenes of things that should last a few seconds like a character raking up leaves that go on for minutes at a time"

These statements show the reviewer's lack of appreciation for the film's artistic and technical value.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "badly written and poorly acted"
- "full of some of the most awful characters ever put onto film"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's negative emotional impact:

- "I spit on this film"
- "worst sequel of all time"
- "dross"
- "a waste of time"

Technical aspects:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's technical aspects:

- "countless scenes where people just turn up at the right place and time to push the film onto the next scene"
- "countless scenes of things that should last a few seconds like a character raking up leaves that go on for minutes at a time"

In analysing this review, I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction expressed, such as "Unfunny" and "a waste of time," indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact. Negative evaluations of the cast and the film's execution underscore the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness. The reviewer's criticism of the film's artistic and technical aspects is evident in phrases like "the joke of the farmer's daughter stretched to 90 minutes" and "good-looking sex comedy that isn't really funny or sexy."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and technical aspects. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's lack of artistic qualities, negative emotional impact, and poor technical aspects provides a comprehensive understanding of why this film was poorly received.

3. Alone in the dark

Shockingly bad

I was honestly surprised by Alone in the Dark. It was so bad, I could hardly believe what I was seeing. There are no characters, just a few stereotypes wandering around and getting killed. The extent of the character development was giving each character a name and an occupation, and that's about it. There was no real plot, and none of the characters seemed to have any motivation. In fact, many action scenes just began on their own, coming from nowhere with a pounding techno track. While I was watching this movie I kept asking "Where is this happening? What's going on?" The acting was high school drama quality, with stiff wooden delivery, as though the actors were reading from cue cards without comprehending their lines. Their trouble delivering lines was made even more obvious by horrible sound design. ADR sounded like it was recorded in an open room. The actors were constantly taking obvious care to hit their marks, looking almost robotic in their movements. So, these listless automatons are whisked through a series of implausible and confusing scenarios, often without even the benefit of transition scenes. They were here, now they're there. This was happening, now that's happening. Random scenes with little rhyme or reason.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction with the film:

- "Shockingly bad"
- "so bad, I could hardly believe what I was seeing"
- "no characters, just a few stereotypes"
- "no real plot"
- "high school drama quality"
- "horrible sound design"
- "listless automatons"
- "implausible and confusing scenarios"

These terms indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer negatively evaluates the cast and the film's execution:

- "The extent of the character development was giving each character a name and an occupation, and that's about it."
- "none of the characters seemed to have any motivation"
- "The acting was high school drama quality, with stiff wooden delivery"
- "actors were reading from cue cards without comprehending their lines"
- "actors were constantly taking obvious care to hit their marks, looking almost robotic in their movements"

These judgments highlight the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness of the cast and the film's execution.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic and technical aspects:

- "no real plot"
- "many action scenes just began on their own, coming from nowhere with a pounding techno track"
- "horrible sound design"
- "ADR sounded like it was recorded in an open room"
- "implausible and confusing scenarios, often without even the benefit of transition scenes"

These statements show the reviewer's lack of appreciation for the film's artistic and technical value.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "no characters, just a few stereotypes"
- "no real plot"
- "high school drama quality"
- "stiff wooden delivery"
- "actors were reading from cue cards without comprehending their lines"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's negative emotional impact:

- "Shockingly bad"

- "so bad, I could hardly believe what I was seeing"
- "listless automatons"
- "implausible and confusing scenarios"

Technical aspects:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's technical aspects:

- "horrible sound design"
- "ADR sounded like it was recorded in an open room"
- "many action scenes just began on their own, coming from nowhere with a pounding techno track"

In analysing this review, I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction expressed, such as "Shockingly bad" and "so bad, I could hardly believe what I was seeing," indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact. Negative evaluations of the cast and the film's execution underscore the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness. The reviewer's criticism of the film's artistic and technical aspects is evident in phrases like "no real plot" and "horrible sound design."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and technical aspects. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's lack of artistic qualities, negative emotional impact, and poor technical aspects provides a clear understanding of why this film was ranked so low.

4. Dracula 3D

If this is Dario Argento's vision of Dracula, it would have been better if he kept it to himself

I am a huge fan of Gothic horror and Dracula films in particular. I am especially fond of the Hammer films with Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. I also like the Bela Legosi ones, as well as big budget Hollywood epics by directors Francis Ford Coppla and John Badam. Hell, I even found Dracula

2000 to be somewhat enjoyable. So it is a huge disappointment to me that the legendary Dario Argento dropped the ball on this production. It seems Mr. Argento, who should know better forgot how to make a film. This flick is poorly edited, looks like crap and is put together haphazardly. Words truly cannot express how bad and fake the digital f/x look in this film. By far THE WORST CGI I have ever seen! The storytelling is inept, made worst with terrible editing. The cast lacks direction and chemistry, which makes it harder not only to view a cohesive film, but care about the characters outcome. Thomas Kretschman lacked intensity and screen presence to make a good Dracula. Casting Rutger Hauer as Van Helsing was one of the things Argento did do right. However, his screen time is limited and was'nt given enough time to develop his character. There is blood (mostly CG) and the lovely ladies of Dracula 3D show us their breasts and backsides.(including Dario's own daughter, the ever so attractive Asia Argento) The erotic elements will receive no complaint from me, but do not make up for such a bad film. Argento's Dracula is 110 minutes long and I would have found that time better spent rearranging my sock drawer.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction with the film:

- "huge disappointment"
- "poorly edited"
- "looks like crap"
- "haphazardly"
- "THE WORST CGI I have ever seen"
- "inept"
- "terrible editing"
- "lacks direction and chemistry"
- "time better spent rearranging my sock drawer"

These terms indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer negatively evaluates the director and actors:

- "Mr. Argento, who should know better forgot how to make a film"

- "Thomas Kretschman lacked intensity and screen presence to make a good Dracula"
- "Casting Rutger Hauer as Van Helsing was one of the things Argento did do right. However, his screen time is limited and wasn't given enough time to develop his character"

These judgments highlight the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness of the director and actors.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic and technical aspects:

- "poorly edited"
- "looks like crap"
- "haphazardly"
- "THE WORST CGI I have ever seen"
- "inept storytelling"
- "terrible editing"
- "lacks direction and chemistry"

These statements show the reviewer's lack of appreciation for the film's artistic and technical value.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "poorly edited"
- "looks like crap"
- "haphazardly"
- "THE WORST CGI I have ever seen"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's negative emotional impact:

- "huge disappointment"
- "time better spent rearranging my sock drawer"

Technical aspects:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's technical aspects:

- "inept storytelling"

- "terrible editing"
- "lacks direction and chemistry"

In analysing this review, I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction expressed, such as "huge disappointment" and "THE WORST CGI I have ever seen," indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact. Negative evaluations of the director and actors underscore the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness. The reviewer's criticism of the film's artistic and technical aspects is evident in phrases like "poorly edited" and "inept storytelling."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and technical aspects. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's lack of artistic qualities, negative emotional impact, and poor technical aspects provides me with insight into Dracula 3Ds negative reception.

5. Children of the living dead

Redefining the word 'Bad'

I wrote a very long review before but for some reason only my summary was up, so here goes at a second attempt. Being the dead fan I am (I have a dead trilogy website) I couldn't resist seeing this movie, even knowing that it would be pretty bad in comparison to Romero's movies. Quite simply, I was blown away. Never before (and I mean this) have I seen such a dire plot, such awful acting and such diabolical camera work. This film isn't even one of those 'So bad it's good' events, failing on every possible level. Cue 90 minutes of unbelievably bad dubbing, atrocious story lines and god-awful filming techniques. It is so hard to express how bad this film is. The film jumps forward 14 years, then 1 year and so on yet has no continuity. We do not know what is going on as each time segment has no relation to the previous one. It is criminal that this film was ever made, and the cheek of John Russo (who I would take great pleasure in torturing) to call this the 'long awaited sequel'. How can people possibly believe that this is good? Surely someone on set would have realised that they were making one of the worst films in history (and that's no lie either). To be honest, I would go so far as to pay people not to watch this, in the vain hope that all copies would be pulled from shelves

and the negatives be burnt. I can't even give this an IMDb rating of one as it simply does not deserve that kind of credibility. Atrocious.

Appraisal framework:

Affect:

-The reviewer expresses strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction with the film:

- "Redefining the word 'Bad'"
- "dire plot"
- "awful acting"
- "diabolical camera work"
- "unbelievably bad dubbing"
- "atrocious story lines"
- "god-awful filming techniques"
- "criminal that this film was ever made"
- "one of the worst films in history"
- "Atrocious"

These terms indicate a deep disappointment and negative emotional impact.

Judgment:

-The reviewer negatively evaluates the director and actors:

- "such awful acting"
- "diabolical camera work"
- "atrocious story lines"
- "god-awful filming techniques"
- "no continuity"
- "John Russo... to call this the 'long awaited sequel'"

These judgments highlight the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness of the director and actors.

Appreciation:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic and technical aspects:

- "dire plot"

- "awful acting"
- "diabolical camera work"
- "unbelievably bad dubbing"
- "atrocious story lines"
- "god-awful filming techniques"
- "no continuity"

These statements show the reviewer's lack of appreciation for the film's artistic and technical value.

Content analysis

Artistic merit:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's artistic qualities:

- "dire plot"
- "awful acting"
- "diabolical camera work"
- "atrocious story lines"

Emotional impact:

-The reviewer highlights the film's negative emotional impact:

- "Redefining the word 'Bad'"
- "criminal that this film was ever made"
- "one of the worst films in history"
- "Atrocious"

Technical aspects:

-The reviewer criticizes the film's technical aspects:

- "unbelievably bad dubbing"
- "god-awful filming techniques"
- "no continuity"

In analysing this review, I identified and categorized the evaluative language used by the reviewer, focusing on affect, judgment, and appreciation. The strong negative emotions and dissatisfaction expressed, such as "Redefining the word 'Bad'" and "Atrocious," indicate a deep disappointment

and negative emotional impact. Negative evaluations of the director and actors underscore the perceived lack of skill and effectiveness. The reviewer's criticism of the film's artistic and technical aspects is evident in phrases like "dire plot" and "god-awful filming techniques."

I quantified and categorized the content of the review into themes: artistic merit, emotional impact, and technical aspects. The reviewer's emphasis on the film's lack of artistic qualities, negative emotional impact, and poor technical aspects provides insight into why *Children of the living dead* was so poorly received.

Summary on the characteristics of the worst reviewed horror-movies

By combining the appraisal framework and content analysis, I identified several common features that contribute to the negative reception of the worst-reviewed horror movies. These features included poor writing and acting, lack of coherence and continuity, bad direction and editing, terrible special effects, and excessive length.

Poor writing and acting

One of the most frequently mentioned issues in the reviews was the poor quality of writing and acting. Reviewers described the characters as "awful," "stereotypes," and lacking motivation. The acting was criticized as "high school drama quality" and "poorly acted." For example, the review of *"Alone in the Dark"* highlighted the lack of character development and the wooden delivery of lines, making the characters seem robotic and unengaging. Similarly, *"I Spit on Your Grave: Déjà Vu"* was criticized for its bad writing and poorly acted characters, which detracted from the overall experience.

Lack of coherence and continuity

Another common feature was the lack of coherence and continuity in the films. Reviewers frequently mentioned that scenes are "random," "confusing," and "pointless," with characters appearing at the right place and time without logical explanation. In *"Children of the Living Dead,"* the reviewer pointed out the film's lack of continuity, with time jumps that have no relation to previous segments, which made it difficult to follow the plot. The review of *"I Spit on Your Grave: Déjà Vu"* also highlighted the film's lack of coherence, with characters appearing in the right place at the right time without any logical progression.

Bad direction and editing

The direction and editing of these films was consistently criticized. Directors were described as having "forgotten how to make a film," and the editing was described as "poorly edited" and "haphazard." For instance, the review of "Dracula 3D" criticized Argento's direction and the film's terrible editing, which resulted in an incoherent and unengaging story. The review of "Chinese Erotic Ghost Stories" also mentioned the poor execution of the film, with little of it actually working as intended.

Terrible special effects

The digital effects and sound design in these films were frequently criticized. CGI was described as the "worst" and "fake," and sound design was criticized for being "horrible." In "Dracula 3D," the reviewer described the digital effects as the "worst CGI" they have ever seen, which detracted from the film's overall quality. Similarly, the review of "Alone in the Dark" highlighted the poor sound design, with ADR sounding like it was recorded in an open room, further diminishing the film's production value.

Excessive length and pacing issues

Reviewers mentioned the excessive length and pacing issues in these films. Scenes were described as unnecessarily long, with dialogue that "goes on and on" without adding to the story. For example, the review of "I Spit on Your Grave: Déjà Vu" criticized the film's nearly two-and-a-half-hour runtime, with scenes that dragged on without contributing to the plot. The review of "Children of the Living Dead" also highlighted the film's pacing issues, with bad dubbing and atrocious storylines that made it difficult to stay engaged.

In summary, the worst-reviewed horror movies were consistently criticized for their poor writing and acting, lack of coherence and continuity, bad direction and editing, terrible special effects, and excessive length and pacing issues. These features contributed to the films' negative reception and made them stand out as examples of poorly executed cinema.

Discussion

Contextualisation

The objective of the first two research questions was to identify the best and worst-ranked genres on IMDb and the top five highest ranked movies on the best-ranked genre and top five lowest ranked movies on the worst-ranked genre. This was done to answer the third and fourth research question, about the qualities of movies that make them good or bad according to viewers. The qualities were analysed from the most popular reviews from each of the identified movies using the appraisal framework and content analysis. The project succeeded in answering its research questions. The first research questions were answered by successfully manipulating the dataset in Python Jupyter notebook. The third and fourth research questions were answered by qualitative analysis and close reading of the reviews, in addition to the methods mentioned, which provided systematic patterns of the key aspects influencing movie reception.

The results of the analysis provide significant insights into the elements that contribute to the success of highly acclaimed films from a humanistic perspective. The analysis revealed that the highest-rated movies within the top-ranked genre, as well as the lowest-rated movies within the bottom-ranked genre, share distinct characteristics that influence their reception. The best-reviewed movies are praised for their artistic merit, innovative cinematic techniques, strong emotional impact, skilled direction, powerful performances, and compelling themes. In contrast, the worst-reviewed movies are criticized for their poor writing and acting, lack of coherence and continuity, bad direction and editing, terrible special effects, and excessive length and pacing issues. Comparing the highest ranked movies of the best genre with the lowest ranked movies of the worst genre provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to a film's success or failure. This comparison is important because it highlights the stark contrast between the elements that make a film highly acclaimed and those that lead to its negative reception.

This study is particularly useful to the field of media studies as it provides empirical evidence on the factors that contribute to the success or failure of films. By analysing the highest ranked movies of the best genre and the lowest ranked movies of the worst genre, the study identifies key factors that influence how films are received by audiences. Comparing the two extremes I could highlight the elements that are most important in a film's reception from audiences. These findings align with existing theories in media studies on audience satisfaction and emotional resonance, emphasizing the need for further research on how narrative techniques and emotional impact influence audience perception. The comparative analysis offers valuable insights for media scholars, guiding them in understanding the key elements that make films resonate with audiences and informing future research and practice in the field.

This study is also valuable to the field of cinematography as it provides concrete evidence on the elements that contribute to the success or failure of films. These findings align with

established theories in cinematography, emphasizing the importance of creativity and technical proficiency in filmmaking. The comparative analysis offers practical insights for cinematographers, helping them understand the key factors that make films visually and technically compelling, and guiding future research and practice in the field. Additionally, the study's focus on narrative techniques and emotional engagement bridges the gap between cinematography and linguistics, highlighting how visual storytelling and language use impact audience perception and reception. This interdisciplinary approach enriches our understanding of film as a medium that combines both visual and linguistic elements to create a cohesive and impactful narrative.

The study belongs to the general field of humanities because it explores the human experience through the lens of film reviews, examining how artistic and technical elements evoke emotions, convey meaning, and shape narratives. This contributes to the broader understanding of media and film as essential components of human culture and communication. The appraisal frameworks' focus on affective terms, judgement and appreciation aligns with linguistic studies' emphasis on the evaluative and emotional aspects of language, as well as literary studies' exploration of how art and narrative evoke emotional responses and convey evaluative meaning. In linguistics and literary studies, the evaluative and emotional language used in reviews reflects the broader social and cultural values embedded in cinematographic works, revealing how films resonate with and influence societal norms, beliefs, and emotional responses. The appraisal framework allows for the dissecting of these values which helps in understanding how they influence the reception of these films. At the same time, content analysis resonates with the social sciences' approach to understanding patterns and trends in human behaviour and the cultural production of cinematography. For example, by categorising and quantifying thematic elements it is possible to gain insight into the collective preferences and expectations of audiences.

Biases

I encountered potential biases during the research process. The selection of reviews from IMDb may introduce a bias, as the platform's user base may not be representative of the general population, leading to a demographic bias. IMDb users who leave reviews might have specific preferences or biases that influence their ratings and comments. Popular films tend to receive more reviews, causing popularity bias. The popularity bias can be solved by including a diverse range of films, both popular and less well-known, to provide a more comprehensive analysis. The possibility of review bombing, where coordinated efforts change ratings, further contribute to potential biases

in my chosen dataset. Additionally, the reviews I analysed were the first ones listed on the IMDb pages, which may not provide a comprehensive view of the overall reception.

Utilising reviews from two different genres introduces potential biases. As each genre has its own audience expectations and stylistic elements, which can lead to inconsistencies in how films are reviewed and perceived. This can introduce biases related to personal preferences, which may influence the comparison between genres. On the other hand, analysing films from different genres provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to a film's success or failure. By choosing two different genres, I incorporated genre-specific elements into the study. The exclusion of those elements would have introduced a different bias.

Moreover, the dataset itself may have potential biases. The IMDb dataset from Kaggle does present the information of over 10 000 movies, but it includes only movies that have an entry on IMDb webpage. This means that movies that have not been entered into IMDb were not a part of the analysis. This may influence the equal representation of countries and time periods. Further, the Kaggle IMDb movies dataset does not represent the entire collection of movies on IMDb. The dataset therefore has the risk of outdated or incomplete data. Kaggle datasets are often curated and contributed to by users, which can introduce biases in data collection and preparation. The dataset may not include all possible data points. I tried to avoid biases caused by this by cleaning the dataset to include data from only a particular time period and by grouping the movies into single genres.

The qualitative approach in only analysing one review per movie and only ten review altogether may not capture a wide range of opinion on the film, which in turn may lead to an incomplete understanding of the film's reception. However, even with the small sample size, the study was able to find patterns and commonalities in the reception of the highest rated and lowest rated films. Additionally, by relying on single reviews, this study is not capturing the diversity of the opinions of a bigger audience. A larger-scale study could combat this issue by choosing a larger sample and by performing distant reading to automatise the analysis.

Like most studies, this study also has to acknowledge the potentiality of a researcher bias. My personal beliefs and expectations may influence the way in which I interpret the data. This can lead to a confirmation bias, where I unconsciously seek out information that I am expecting to see based on my hypothesis. To mitigate these biases, I adopted a systematic and transparent approach in analysing the reviews. The most important part of this was following Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) and content analysis based on Krippendorff's method (2019) closely and sticking to their guidelines. Following this, I analysed the reviews by impartial close reading and annotation.

Challenges and implications

During the data processing, I had to resolve a few unexpected challenges. I did not expect the results of the movie genres to indicate mixed genres, like the sequence of romance, fantasy, animation. To resolve this issue, I counted the scores for each individual genre instead of each individual movie. Some movies also came up as having ratings of zero, because they either had not been updates to Kaggle yet or they were so new that they did not have ratings yet. To fix this issue, I decided to limit the scope to movies published in 2020 or earlier. A few movies came up as not having a genre. Those movies were also ignored from the analysis stage. Even so, the Kaggle IMDb dataset needs to be regarded as a sample of IMDb movie data, not as the general view of it.

The findings of this research have several implications in the fields of media studies, cinematography, linguistics, literary studies and cultural studies. Analysing the features of movie reviews is about several aspects, including language, emotion, content, implications and meaning. Understanding the features that contribute to the success or failure of a movie is vital for directors and the film-industry. Further, critics can use the nuanced information of reviews to provide detailed evaluations.

Finding an answer for the first two research questions of this study by programming both offered additional information that the IMDb webpage does not offer and verified existing information. The IMDb webpage offers information on most popular genres, but the genre selection on the webpage is not characterized just one genre at a time. It is offered in genre groupings, such as comedy-action-western. In this study I extracted the most popular and least popular genres as only one singular genre, to be able to focus on specific top and lowest rated genres. I did first extract the genre groupings, which's accuracy I was able to verify from the webpage. In addition, I was able to verify the top five and last five extracted movies and their ratings, as my results matched the ones on the webpage. This kind of simple data manipulation is able to certify information provided on webpages or any other source.

Future researchers could expand upon the contents of this study by incorporating a more diverse range of reviews and genres. The analysis could be expanded to include reviews from additional platforms and cultural contexts to ensure equal representation. In addition, integrating other disciplinary knowledge, such as psychology or media studies, could enrich the analysis and offer new insights from other perspectives into the reviews and their implications on the films. For instance, psychological research into emotional responses to films could provide a deeper understanding on to why certain films evoke greater reactions in the reviewers. To gain deeper

knowledge into a particular genre, other studies could focus on reviews from top-rated and lowest-rated movies of a single genre.

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Appendix

Table 1: Themes and the number of instances

| Theme | Mentions in reviews of highest ranked movies | Mentions in reviews of lowest ranked movies |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Editing | 2 | 4 |
| Cinematic techniques | 4 | 4 |
| Direction | 4 | 3 |
| Acting | 4 | 4 |
| Artistic value | 5 | 2 |
| Educational value | 3 | 0 |
| Theme/Plot | 3 | 4 |
| Length | 0 | 4 |