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| |  | | --- | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Judge J. Howard Sundermann, Jr.  First Appellate District of Ohio     |  | | --- | | **Read other reviews:**  [Paul Joseph](http://docs.google.com/minorityreport_joseph.htm)  [Paul Bergman](http://docs.google.com/minorityreport_bergman.htm)  [Internet Movie Database](http://www.us.imdb.com/Title?0181689)  [All Movie Guide](http://allmovie.com/cg/avg.dll?p=avg&sql=A262610)  [Readers' comments](http://docs.google.com/user_feedback.htm) |     The pre-cogs are effectively slaves, devoting their lives to predicting murders. In the film, the audience is never told if the process is voluntary on their part or whether the pre-cogs are taken by the State when they are found to have the needed abilities. Would we be willing to take away the lives of a few to save thousands? | |  | | --- | | ***Minority Report***  by Judge J. Howard Sundermann  I went to *Minority Report* with great anticipation. The film combines one of the greatest directors of all time, Stephen Spielberg (*Indiana Jones, Close Encounters, Schindler's List, Private Ryan*), with superstar Tom Cruise. It is a science fiction film, which is one of my favorite genres, and the film was uniformly given excellent reviews all over the country. In his review, Roger Ebert said *Minority Report* "reminds us why we go to movies in the first place." But I thought it was just OK, maybe a six on a scale of ten. I would recommend it, it is certainly better than Spielberg's *A.I.*, but I found it to be well below my expectations. The set-up is good. About fifty years into the future, a way has been found to predict murders ahead of time and the department of pre-crime, headed by Cruise, finds and arrests the potential murderer before the killing takes place. How the pre-crime department knows about the murders in advance is an inherent fault in the film. People called pre-cogs are somehow picking up the thoughts of would-be murderers and these thoughts are fed into computers. The pre-cogs seem to be lying in an indoor swimming pool twenty-four hours a day with wires attached to their heads. The names that identify a potential murder come rolling down a shute with the name written on something like a pool ball. The pre-cogs are 100% accurate.  Good science fiction can make us look at the world in a new way, and this story accomplishes that by bringing up some interesting legal issues. Obviously, people are being arrested for crimes that they have not yet committed but, according to the film, are certain to commit. Can people be arrested who have not committed a crime but who are certain to commit one? In the film, The District of Columbia has been murder-free for six years and the program is very popular. I suspect that a program like this, which has accuracy near 100%, would be approved easily today. This question is particularly relevant considering the current terrorist problem. Also the pre-cogs are effectively slaves, devoting their lives to predicting murders. In the film, the audience is never told if the process is voluntary on their part or whether the pre-cogs are taken by the State when they are found to have the needed abilities. Would we be willing to take away the lives of a few to save thousands? There is also the possibility that the accusation of a crime could lead to a murder attempt that would otherwise not have taken place.  Cruise himself has his name given as a potential murderer and looks for the victim, whom he would not have known but for the prediction. Spielberg had the imagination and the funding to ask scientists and engineers to predict some future devices that are employed in the film. Many devices are voice-activated as on *Star Trek*. The way cars move around is interesting, and when one goes into a store, a computer conducts a retinal scan and you are addressed personally and directed to what you might be interested in. Also, small robotic spiders search a building for Cruise by performing a retinal scan of everyone there.  But to me, the failure is in the story itself. Cruise, after being accused of a potential murder, becomes a man on the run, a la Hitchcock. The chase scenes were disappointing and rather pedestrian. A character from the justice department is for some reason opposed to Cruise and the pre-crime program, so he is seemingly introduced just so there can be a bad guy. But the real bad guy turns out to be the director of the pre-crime department, played by Max von Sydow, who is afraid that when the program goes national he will lose control. My take on the film as a reviewer is another minority report.  Posted July 19, 2002 |   **Would you like to comment on this article? 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