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Terrorism and the Entertainment Industry: Theater, Film, and Television in a Post-9/11 World

Grace Raber
Ohio Northern University

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Terrorism and the Entertainment Industry: Theater, Film, and Television in a Post-9/11 World

GRACE RABER- OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

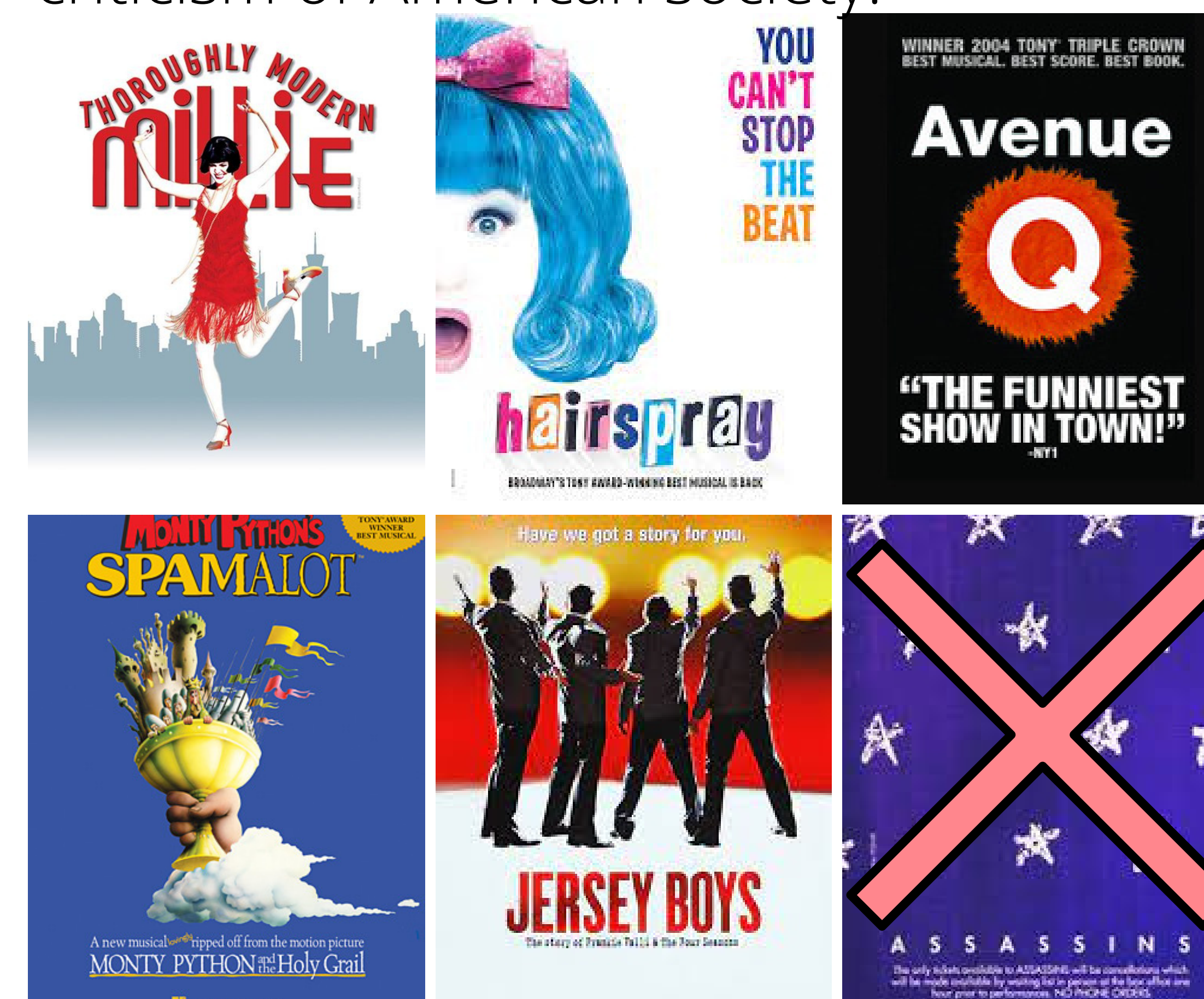
This paper serves to explore the division in the entertainment industry after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The entertainment industry was divided between placing its focus on pointing out the flaws in society with a heightened sense of violence and paranoia and helping the community heal by trying to leave behind reality and providing comfort, even just for a few hours. This paper reflects mainly upon the TV, film, and the Broadway musical entertainment industries. The research for this paper is pulled primarily from various essays and journals as well as the box office records and Academy Awards from the time. Several Playbills in the Playbill.com archive are used as well as national television advertisement campaigns.

BACKGROUND

The Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda coordinated the hijacking of four commercial airplanes, targeting the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and, presumably, the US Capitol Building. These attacks cost a total of 2,977 lives, several billion dollars, and the peace of mind and security of the United States.

THEATER

After the initial three day shutdown, shows appealed to the Broadway community with safe and comforting stories, rather than pushing the boundaries of the community. Shows like Assassins closed as audiences did not respond well to darker themes and criticism of American society.

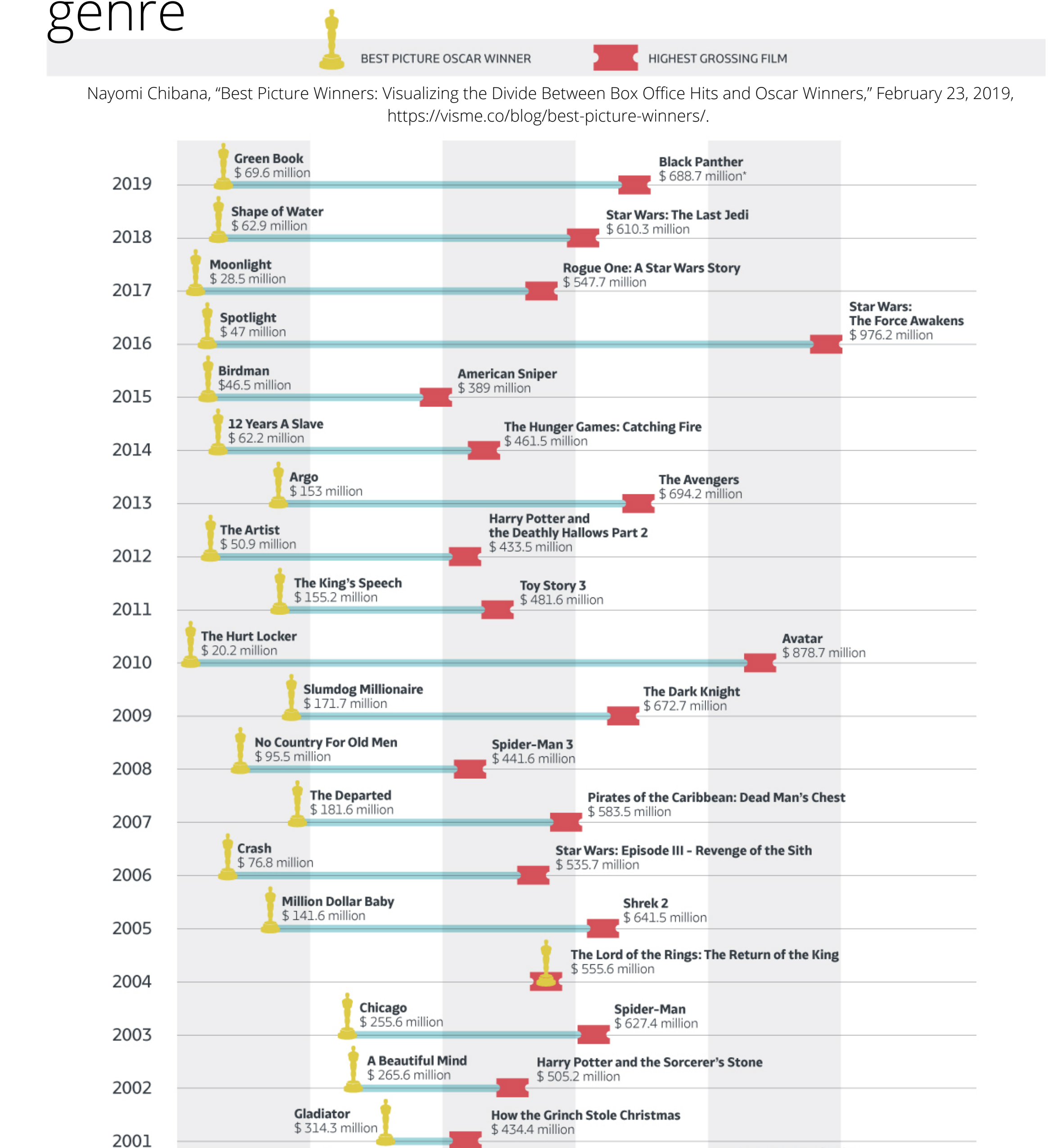


TELEVISION

Television programs split public opinion. Late night show speeches inspired the nation. Reality TV boomed in popularity and allowed audiences to escape their own reality. Darker dramas drew audiences in and did not present a utopian fantasyland, but rather a darker and grittier "real" world in which everyone lives.

FILM

Overall, audiences chose to see franchise fantasy films as opposed to dramatic independent films with psychological horror emerging as a new genre



CONCLUSION

The entertainment industry can either act as an escape and reprieve from the world or it can hold a mirror up to society to point out the flaws and pave a path forward. After all, Gene Weingarten said it best: "When people are filled with grief, they need to cry. When they are filled with fear, they need to laugh."