

POP CULTURE

Popcorn & Goblins: Covid-19 at the Movies

By Max Lerner | PAID POST
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If there's one thing that both your college-kid cinephile friend and geriatric living below your in Apt 4C has craved during this pandemic, it's been the movies. Or opioids. But mainly movies.

Social life hasn't felt complete without straining your neck to look up at inflated faces on a theater screen. Movie theaters are where we spend casual time with loved ones, pass time peacefully, and develop connections to people (mostly fictional) from all walks of life. Alongside black or white,

The New York Times

bourgeois or proletariat, we can experience the whole spectrum of emotions—especially if we’re watching Lynch or Almodóvar. It’s a stunning, soul-enveloping, shared experience. But it’s the last descriptor that now seems problematic: shared.

To think that danger lurks so close within the bounds of the once safe theater—how aghast. Or is it? In reality, most millennials would feel safer at a packed Village pub on a Friday night than in a theater sitting six feet away from an unmasked stranger munching on Red Hots. Cue: illogic.

Your buddy Jess is hosting a thing at her new (newest) six-figure boyfriend’s high-rise in Yorkville. It’s a Saturday night. You still need to eviscerate your muscles, so you head to the gym and puff out thousands of aerosol particles, like everyone else, while “running” on a treadmill. You exit the gym and pass scores of Jerseyans on the sidewalk who drank bottomless mimosas earlier and left all thoughts of distancing and masks—what are those?—in the sewer. You freshen up at your tenement then hop on the uptown 6, where you get pinned against the door as all the Harlemites head home. Once you arrive at Jess’s place, you see five familiars and ten “who’s-its?” You haven’t met most of these people, but hey—I’ll try a sip of your Negroni, you’ll try a sip of my marg, and la-goyim!

Most of us have readapted to the regularities of social life while maintaining the peculiarities of COVID-19 safety...to some degree. There are times when each of us falters. For some of us, it’s too often, and for healthy apartment clingers under 40, perhaps too little. Even TikTokers know when too much is too much. The [AMC Theatres #shootyoursafety Challenge](#), for instance, encourages users to demonstrate COVID safety in a fun way that hints at the possibility of thousands of new followers or seeing oneself on the big screen. So if your legs are feeling shaky at the thought of seeing a rom-com, pay Father TikTok a visit for reassurance.

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Life must return to normal. Although most venues can't properly regulate safety, movie theaters are one of them. Seat reservations keep strangers six feet away from you—what a godsend. When was the last time you wanted someone next to you? You think you snagged a seat in the perfect middle of the theater when a man in a squeaky leather jacket plops down beside you and starts rifling through his popcorn. Not anymore.

Sitting six feet away from people eliminates all concern of saliva drops and goblins entering your bubble. You can remove your mask to eat and drink, but most folks stick to the guidelines and put them back on when they're done—aside from the aforementioned goblin here and there. It's an honor system. No one will tattletale if you don't, but know that Dr. Fauci sees all.

Movie theaters have become more considerate. People know that these times call for caution. We're all trying to play our part in this confounding pandemic that endlessly surges on. But movie theaters are a perennial experience that bring art enthusiasts together unlike no other medium. Enjoy them. Heck, if you're already out and about, they're one of the last places you should worry about.