



Roger Ebert 1942-2013



There are few film critics in this world that could actually claim to be an inspiration. Not that Roger Ebert ever would – he was too modest for that. But the man who wrote movies and wrote so winningly about movies has died at the age of 70. The world is a poorer place for it.

Born in 1942 in Urbana, Illinois, Ebert was a writer from an early age, working as a school paper sports reporter before becoming an editor and columnist for *The Daily Illini* at the University of Illinois. From there, he joined the *Chicago Sun-Times* as a copy boy, but rose up the ranks quickly thanks to his voluminous knowledge of the cinema. He ended up as the paper's film critic, but unlike many of his contemporaries, Ebert was also a participant in movies. He wrote *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls*, *Up!* and *Beneath The Valley Of The Ultra-Vixens* for director Russ Meyer, moonlighting from his work at the paper. He also cropped up for cameos in several movies.

Alongside Gene Siskel (who worked for the Sun-Times rival *Chicago Tribune*), Ebert became nationally famous in the States for creating and presenting several shows, including, most notably, syndicated review series *At The Movies* in 1982. It was there that the pair introduced their iconic "thumbs" ratings. Yet despite all the acclaim and close relationships with filmmakers, Ebert never craved fame for its own end: "Any critic who cares about whether he's quoted in an ad or not must have a bubble for a brain," he once said.

Endlessly happy to share his love – and occasional, well-expressed hatred – of movies, he produced columns and books and organised the EbertFest in 1991, which introduced many to forgotten gems and films he felt hadn't gotten a fair shake. He was the first film critic to win the Pulitzer Prize and was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame in 2005. The Directors Guild Of America made him an honorary life member in 2009.

He battled cancer since 2002, losing part of his jaw and the ability to speak. Unbowed, he continued to write and make appearances. Then, just this week, he announced that his cancer had returned more viciously and that he was taking leave to fight it once again. He lost the fight today.

"No good film is too long," he once wrote, a sentiment he felt strongly enough about to have engraved on pens. "No bad movie is short enough." His time with us, however, was much too short. He's survived by his wife, a stepdaughter and two step grandchildren, plus his work is forever archived at his site, and we'll cherish his legacy.



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