

A Film Critic's Guide with Alexander Robinson

Owen Shapiro 00:04

Welcome to Kino Society with Owen Shapiro. Welcome to Kino Society. In today's episode, we have Alexander Robinson, a film critic who has always loved movies. pursuing his passion. He attended the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he majored in critical Film Studies. Then he began reviewing movies on youtube, like the Real Mr. Robinson, where he has more than 4000 followers. Welcome to Kino Society, Alexander.

Alexander Robinson 00:39

Thank you for having me on.

Owen Shapiro 00:41

Oh. Would you mind telling us a bit about your background? And what's drew you to film criticism?

Alexander Robinson 00:49

Yeah, well, I come from both of my parents work in the film industry. So I've always sort of had a lot of exposure to movies through them. But for some reason, I never actually wanted to go into film production, there was just always that side of me where I wanted to, I just felt better talking about movies, and I got more joy out of talking movies, rather than making them up. But, um, and I just, you know, it really started when I was just doing it for fun. Writing small movie reviews on this site no longer exists. But flixtter.com. It used to be part of I think Facebook used to own it. At one point, I just started doing written reviews there. And it took me a couple of years before I actually started transitioning to doing video reviews on YouTube, because I always hated how my voice sounded. But eventually, once I got into college, I overcame that fear. And over time, like I just started talking about movies, as made an effort to try to see as many new releases as possible while reviewing some old ones, whether they be good or bad. And that's pretty much how I ended up where I am now.

Owen Shapiro 02:09

All right, is there any movie that you'd call your favorite?

Alexander Robinson 02:14

It's really hard to pick out a movie that is your absolute all time favorites. And this actually took me a couple of years to really realize because I'd picked from, say, jaws or the original Godzilla from 1954. But I have to say Back to the Future is probably the closest thing to me saying is my favorite movie of all time, because it's it's literally a perfect movie, great cast. A very tight script. Very clever. Moments scattered throughout. It's just in my eyes. It's a perfect movie. And it's one that I literally never get tired of watching.

Owen Shapiro 02:54

Yeah, that movie has a very good screenplay. So do you ever? It seems like you mostly talk about mainstream movies? So do you ever delve into more indie or unknown stuff?

Alexander Robinson 03:05

I do. It's not as often because from a creator standpoint, on YouTube, sometimes those smaller movies don't get a whole lot of attention. In terms of views, which if you're which, by the way, I should say, for any one who's looking into becoming a film critic on YouTube, that is not the mentality you want to have going into this through the eyes of views. You want to have a passion when you do this stuff. But I have talked about some smaller movies. Again, not as often, but a couple of examples I can name. Last year I talked about first cow two years ago, 2018 talked about this movie that debuted at South by Southwest called villain. So with Bill skarsgard, and Micah Monroe, and whenever I come across a smaller movie that I really liked, or not just like, but love, I tried to get the word out, and emphasize how good this movie is like, No, you guys gotta see this. I know there's some bigger movie coming out right now, or at least in the before times, but give this little one a shot, you won't be disappointed.

Owen Shapiro 04:17

So is there anything that you would say in particular, you don't understand why it became so popular, why it's so loved. Maybe the other way around as well that you like something that usually isn't liked.

Alexander Robinson 04:31

Oh, you mean as in like a movie that comes out. And I'm just shocked that people more people don't love it.

Owen Shapiro 04:38

A movie that either either most people like that you don't or that you like that most people don't.

Alexander Robinson 04:45

You know, it's one of those. It's one of the things where you are in a critic for as long as eight years. And you have to really train yourself to acknowledge that other people have opinions. And, like you're not, your goal is to not change their mind about it, because that's going to be a very impossible task. And if you keep obsessing with trying to change everyone's opinion on a movie that you have a different opinion on, then it's gonna be a no win situation. But it's sometimes it's a little difficult to understand why people don't like a certain movie that you love. For example, last year, David Fincher is man, I really love that movie. And a lot of his mainly because of the way it was made to act like a movie that was made during the 1940s, to where they had to basically relearn how to make movies from that decade. But a lot of people in my critics guild didn't like it so much. They didn't say it was bad. They were just like, no, it's fine. It's a fine movie. And again, I just have to pull myself back and just be like, Oh, come on, really. But what about this? So it's, it's again, it takes a lot of trial and error.

Owen Shapiro 06:06

Yeah, I agree with him. That movie was, honestly most people really liked that. From what I've seen. I thought it was just okay, though, man. Great.

Alexander Robinson 06:15

See, I'm Tracy, I'm trying to hold back right now. That's how much I've been practicing.

Owen Shapiro 06:20

So how would you describe your personal tastes?

Alexander Robinson 06:23

I'm more I'm definitely more of a science fiction type of guy. I mean, I, I like any type of film genre out there. As long as my belief is like, as long as the movies good. I don't care what genre it belongs into. But there's just something about science fiction that it's just, it's it's weird to this. How do I actually put it and feel like what science fiction, it's just these things that could possibly exist, exist at one point. And there's a lot of imagination put into creating certain worlds. Whether it be a certain piece of technology, or a new language, or an alien race, like a movie that comes to mind from the last decade, I think, is one of the best of the last decade was arrival. Just basically, it's an alien invasion movie, but the aliens just come down and want to talk to us on Earth, then the whole theme of that movie is communication. I feel like science fiction Where is where a lot of creativity comes in. And the best science fiction movies are probably the most subtle for me.

Owen Shapiro 07:33

Yeah, that makes sense. I think AI isn't a rival, the one where it's about trying to communicate the language with the aliens. Yeah,

07:40

it's a Denise Felton ofay with Amy Adams and Jeremy Renner.

Owen Shapiro 07:44

Yeah, that was a good movie. I really like that one. How is your vlogging changed since you started?

08:16

To copy someone else's success in terms of like their style of film criticism, like when a lot of people would base their style off of the Angry Video Game Nerd Nostalgia Critic. But as time goes on, you realize that you're gonna have to make your own style, you're just gonna have to be you and not try to be someone else in front of a camera. And again, that sort of takes time to get used to and doing like a side by side comparison of the videos I made back then in 2013 versus now, eight years later, it's just it's like night and day, but it's also really cringe worthy to watch your videos from eight years ago when you were just a clueless moron starting out.

Owen Shapiro 09:04

So are there any specific youtubers or critics who admire further one of the

09:08

big names that got me into wanting to do this? Are Corey Coleman from Corey Coleman and Martin Thomas from double toasted because back in the day, there was this website called they ran a website called spill calm, where it was pretty much animated movie reviews that but it was done in a way where it was really just a bunch of friends sitting around a table talking about movies. And it was ad libbed. There were notes but it felt very natural. And that's how I want my reviews to come off. I want to come across like I'm having a conversation with somebody else rather than actually reading a script. And just going down note beat for beats on everything that I want from a movie or everything that I like. dislike

about whatever movie I'm talking about his Do you think there's such thing as objective film criticism? Absolutely it because I can tell you there are a ton of movies that you people will have disagreements on. And the people that really either like or dislike a movie, they're probably going to have certain personal feelings towards sad movie and an example that I could give right off the bat is A Bug's Life. kind of a weird example. But as the years as I got older, I realized that Bug's Life tends to fall into like, everyone's bottom list of Pixar movies in the sense that it's not as beloved as I thought when I was a kid. And there's a lot of personal attachment that I have to that movie that only I can understand. So I can't again, films incredibly subjective. And it's ultimately like your opinions. Whether it's your personal like relationship to a movie, what a certain movie reminded you of that it's movies are going to affect you in very different ways. And even with the negative side, if there's a movie that tackles a subject matter that you personally find offensive, then that's like, that's your what who you are. It's not really fair to sometimes I don't think it's fair to really criticize a movie for its personal for something that it does that you personally find offensive. But that's just who you are.

Owen Shapiro 11:36

Are there any movies that your opinion of has completely changed over time?

11:40

Yeah, yeah. of the biggest example that that I can give. And I honestly, like, don't like talking about this movie is Joker. When I first saw that movie, I thought it was good. Like, I didn't fall in love with it or anything. I just thought it was a fine comic book movie that had an interesting take on the Joker. But the more that time went on, and the more like I really thought back in the movie, it just deteriorated for me. I'd watched it a second time. And I'm like, wow, this is actually awful. Like, it's not even. It doesn't even stay true to who the Joker is. It's trying to humanize and have you feel sympathy for this psychotic? This character that it's his core is psychotic just because he wants to be psychotic. He's not trying to do a wrong and I feel like that movie completely missed the mark. And I don't know. It just Joker is a movie that really did not. sit well with me. On the opposite. And bridesmaids. It was a movie that I saw for the first time in theaters when it came out in 2011. And I hated it. Like I just didn't understand why so many people love that when it came out. And then I re watched it again, two years ago. And like, you know what, this is actually really funny. What would what mood was I in to where I just didn't like this? Because if I could go back in time and like, tell my 20 year old self. Hey, you're actually going to really like bridesmaids later on? I thought my older self would be crazy. Because that like yeah, my opinion for those both of those movies has really changed.

Owen Shapiro 13:34

I have not seen bridesmaids, but I absolutely agree with Joker that movie. I thought it was okay when it came out. But it's really kind of oversimplifies the issue of mental illness. It's very, yeah, it really just did not know what it was doing at times.

Alexander Robinson 13:51

Yeah, I mean, I've talked about Joker a lot of my channel when maybe not a lot, but I definitely had my final say on Joker and of all the like, movies to do about like the comic book characters to do a movie about mental health with the Joker is the absolute wrong character. But that's all I'll say.

Owen Shapiro 14:14

So do you have any future plans?

Alexander Robinson 14:17

Oh, well, my big thing I'm doing right now on YouTube is I'm going through all the Disney animated movies that I have not reviewed every Wednesday until I'm finished. So that would be the movies I have to review are everything from Snow White to record ralph they add just today as we're recording this review, I put up my review for Fantasia and then just a lot of other videos that I have planned. I'm doing a watch live watch party series for the entire Marvel Cinematic Universe. Because this is something I had planned to do as a result of the pandemic just to put out more content, but I didn't get around to it last year and My ultimate goal is to try to continue beyond this year try to continue doing my YouTube reviews. But also step up as an entertainment host for like IGN or Entertainment Weekly. I would like to work for a major outlets and beyond just my movie reviews on YouTube,

Owen Shapiro 15:23

what advice would you give to an aspiring film critic or filmmaker, be yourself.

Alexander Robinson 15:29

That's probably the most important advice that I can give anyone. You can be inspired by other people who are doing movie reviews on YouTube, like Chris Stockman or double toasted, but don't try to copy that image. If you try copying what they do, then you're not going to get the full attention. If you just be yourself and you be completely honest with your opinions, and no matter how controversial they might be, you'll stick out and you'll get people who come in and go, you know what, I don't agree with this person. But he's very honest about what he's saying. So I like him or her. Yeah, just Just don't be afraid to be yourself. And don't be afraid of trying to go along with the general public and what they think if you really feel like there's a movie out there that everyone's loving that you just don't tell them how much you don't like that movie. But on that same note, if I were to give another piece of advice, don't dedicate your crit bulk of your criticisms to negativity. And it's very important that you celebrate movies and celebrate the stuff that you love, rather than just utterly focusing on the stuff that you hate. That will definitely make you from personal experience talking about the stuff that you love, rather than the stuff that you hate, will help with your mental health.

Owen Shapiro 16:56

Where can my listeners find and connect with you?

Alexander Robinson 16:59

You can find me on youtube.com forward slash the real Mr. Robinson. Again, that's that'll be your source for movie reviews, and other reviews out there, whether they be television stuff, which I don't review as often because TVs a little more I have to dedicate more time to TV than I would a movie, but YouTube is my main outlet. So you can also find me on twitch.tv slash real Mr. Robinson. I just started doing Twitch streams this year, actually, yeah. And then also on YouTube, you can find links to my Twitter, Instagram, letterboxed and patreon accounts.

Owen Shapiro 17:38

That's all for today. Don't forget, you can subscribe to kindle society on iTunes and Spotify.