**The Joker Massacre**

James Holmes, the man identified as the killer responsible for the massacre at the premiere of the latest Batman film: *The Dark Knight* Rises, dressed himself up as the *Joker*, the arch villain in the previous Batman film:

*The Dark Knight*

. James Holmes, who announced himself to the police as

*"the Joker"*

, has clearly modelled himself and his actions on the extremely demented character played by Heath Ledger in

*The Dark Knight*

of 2008.

**Natural Born Killers**

Oliver Stone's 1994 film, *Natural Born Killers*, was blamed for 8 murders which the killers modelled on the film. As 18-year-old Christopher Smith was being led away by the police for murdering an 82-year-old man, he shouted to the media:

*"I am a natural born killer!"*

This echoed the words of actor Woody Harrelson in the movie.

15-Year-old, Jason Lewis murdered his parents. Police found that Lewis worshipped satan, and along with three friends, had formulated a plan to kill all their parents and to copy the cross-country murder spree portrayed in Oliver Stone's, *Natural Born Killers.*

## Silence of the Lambs

The same week that *Silence of the Lambs* won an academy award for best picture, a young man decapitated his handicapped mother.                                                          *"I'm Hannibal the cannibal!"*
he claimed, as he was led away by the police. (Associated press, 26 March 1993).

## Horror Films

13-Year-old, Eric Smith who loved reading *Stephen King* novels and watching gruesome slasher movies, lured 4-year-old, Derrick Robie into the woods, bludgeoned his head with rocks and sodomised his body.

Scott Edward May, a 17-year-old obsessed with slasher movies, the occult and heavy metal music, attacked a girl during their first date. He stabbed her. They had just seen the movie *The Cutting Edge*
. May told the police that he had had an urge to kill since childhood.
*"I like to go to the movies a lot. A lot of people get stabbed in movies. I really like the Texas Chain Saw Massacre. A lot of people got stabbed in that."*

The children convicted of the brutal murder of James Bulger, in 1993, splashed their victim in blue paint, in imitation of the film: *Child's Play 3.*

After watching *Jungle Fever*, a 13-year-old boy raped his 8-year-old female cousin.

The film *Scream* was identified as the inspiration for a murder in Belgium in 2001.

Cho Seung-Hui, the student who killed 32 people in Fairfax, Virginia, in 2007 had repeatedly watched the ultra-violent Korean movie: *Old Boy* and modelled poses from the film in his video diary.

## Choreographed Sadism

Stanley Kubrick's, 1971 film: *A Clockwork Orange*, was widely blamed for numerous copycat crimes of its choreographed sadistic violence and gang rape. The director himself withdrew

*A Clockwork Orange*
from UK distribution in response.

## Avoiding Exploitative Violence

In the golden age of Hollywood, effective action and suspense stories were shown where violence was sensitively portrayed, mostly being suggested, rather than actually seen. Most of the actual violence took place off camera and was without the blood, gore and extremely graphic, turbo-charged violence which is becoming a hallmark of many Hollywood action films today. As Alfred Hitchcock showed, you could create very effective films that had shock and suspense, without needing to portray any graphic violence at all.

## Medium Overwhelms Message

Even when some films have a good message, the medium can overwhelm the message. Just because computer generated images are now making possible more *"realistic"* sequences than ever before, does not mean that it is necessary, or helpful, to do so.

## Training Mass-Murdering Psychopaths

There are also an increasing number of video games which glamorize mass killing sprees. The potential impact of such desensitization on a psychopath, or sociopath, has been all too well demonstrated time and again. Many of the mass-murderers of tomorrow are being programmed by such massive overdoses of violence through Hollywood and violent video games today.

## Toxic Mix

When you add to this toxic mix, the extremely aggressive, angry rap, rock, hip-hop and other noise masquerading as music, it should not surprise us when such horrendous atrocities take place.

## Ideas Have Consequences

Secular humanism is a worldview of destruction. Those who hate God, love death. The massacre in Aurora is just another demonstration of the truth of the depravity of man, the danger of glamourizing violence in the entertainment industry, violent video games, superficial materialism and self-centred existentialism.

## World War of Worldviews

We are involved in a spiritual world war of worldviews. We need to learn to discern, we need to redeem the media and we need to clean the screen.

### Redeeming the Media

Dr. Ted Baehr of the Christian Film and Television Commission and Editor of Movieguide has been working for decades to redeem the values of the entertainment industry by influencing industry executives and by informing and equipping the public about the influence of the entertainment media. His ministry needs our support.

### MTV

Matthew Broderick commented: *"I often wonder: Do movies influence the world, or does the world influence the movies? What is influencing us more than we know is MTV!"*
US News and World Report calculated that Music Television (MTV), averages 1,500 sexual acts, or references per hour!

### Fuel on the Fire

No less a media authority than Ted Turner, the Founder of CNN, declared that: *"Everything we are exposed to influences us… those violent films influence us, and the TV programmes influence us. The weaker your family is, the more they influence you… The problems with families in our cities are catastrophic. When you put violent programmes before people who have not had a lot of love in their lives, and who are angry anyway, it's like pouring gasoline on the fire."* (Los Angeles Times).

### Selling Your Soul

Marilyn Munroe mused: *"Hollywood is a place where they will pay you $10,000 for a kiss and 50 cents for your soul!"*

### Uncouth Anti-Heroes

At the Cognac Film Festival of 1996, Gregory Peck commented: *"Generally, my characters were dignified and brave men who did their duty stoically. Today the heroes are the anti-heroes of yesterday. They are motivated by hatred, greed and violence. They are rude, vulgar, ill-educated and incapable of making an effort because they are totally selfish and devoid of morals."*

**Influential**

There is a tremendous power in art and entertainment to change lives and to shape society. Through the mass communications media, particularly through the entertainment industry, ideas and values are being promoted that transform history. The media can be used to inspire great sacrifice and service. It can also influence people to commit terrible acts of cruelty and carnage.

As Dr. Ted Baehr of Movieguide explains: *"Whoever controls the media, controls the culture."*

**Character Shaping**

To most young people, films are more real than reality. Movies show you what to do, how to do it, when to do it, why to do it, and how to feel about it. Children learn by teachers presenting information and behaviour, repeating the information and behaviour and by being rewarded for the accurate feedback of the information and/or behaviour. Films and television present, repeat and reward behaviour even more than parents and teachers do, because it occupies more time, delivers more information per minute, and is exciting, entertaining and captivating. So what films and programmes are you watching?

**So what is the solution?**

1. It is important that we recognise that immoral, violent, occultic and pagan films, DVDs, TV programmes and computer games present a serious threat to the development of our children. *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."*
Ephesians 5:11

2. **Obtain documentaries** that will help alert your family, friends, youth group and congregation to the deceptions and dangers in many films. For example: Death by Entertainment, Learn to Discern, Hollywood Vs. Religion, Hells Bells and The Final Frontier.                    *"*
*They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and to show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean."*
Ezekiel 44:23

3. **Be selective** in your viewing choices. Take control over what is filling and forming your children's minds. Rediscover the joy of reading great books. Set proper priorities. Relegate films and DVDs to a subordinate position - below exercise, worship, fellowship, evangelism and

service.                    *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will."*                    Romans 12:2

4. **Refuse to waste your time**, or money on immoral, anti-Christian films, but rather choose to support good, quality family films that honour God, such as Fireproof, Courageous, Ben Hur, The Ten Commandments, etc.                    *"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent, or praiseworthy – think about such things."*
Philippians 4:8

5. **Pray for wisdom** (James 1:5) and discernment (Proverbs 3:21). Learn to think critically. Discuss the film, its characters and its message in the light of the Bible:
Who is the hero?
Who is the villain?
What is the basic message of the film?
How is the family portrayed?
How is the church portrayed?
How is love portrayed?
How true is the film to history?
How is the conflict resolved in the film?
What is the worldview of the film?
Would you be embarrassed to sit through the film with your parents/children, or the Lord Jesus?

What would you have done differently if you were the main character in the story?
*"So give your servant a discerning heart… to distinguish between right and wrong… "* 1 Kings 3:9

6. **Speak up** for moral, God-honouring entertainment and speak out against blasphemous, degrading and exploitative productions. Write to, or phone, producers of TV programmes, scriptwriters, directors and producers of films (                    **www.Movieguide.org**   regularly publishes those details with their film reviews). Be sure to praise the good as well as to protest against the bad.
*"Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evil doers?"*
Psalm 94:16

## Know Before You Go

You need to know before you go. Before going to a movie, or renting a film, visit **www.movieguide.org** so that you can choose to support positive, uplifting, excellent entertainment that reinforces Christian values and boycott the anti-family, degrading and demented options.

## Learn to Discern

We need to help our children discern between the good, the bad and the ugly. Refuse to waste your time and money on immoral, anti-Christian films, but rather choose to support good quality family films that honour God. Take control over what is filling and forming your mind. Be selective in your viewing choices. Get informed. Be discerning. Every time you purchase a cinema ticket, rent, or buy a DVD, you are casting a vote. Be sure that you only invest in family-friendly and God-honouring films.

*"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."* Ephesians 5:15-16

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See also:
**Media and Violence**
**Minds, Morals and Movies**
**Media Expert Responds to Joker Massacre at Dark Knight Screening**
**Hollywood, Humanism and History**