Thomas McCarthy

Ms. Charla Hughes

ENC 1101-48

20 September 2012

The Power of Movies to Shape Life

 For the past one hundred years, movies have shaped our way of life. Whether it is taking someone to the movies on a first date or meeting with other friends, the movie theater serves as a centerpiece and cultural touchstone for art and entertainment that would not be possible without one thing: movies. Movies immerse us, the viewers, in a new and exciting world where anything is possible. All throughout my life I have grown up with movies, and I have had a strong attraction to them ever since I can remember. Some of my earliest memories are watching the *Star Wars* series. Movies have opened my eyes to what this world has to offer me, and what I can give back to the world that I live in.Films began to change my life beginning with the movie *Spirit*,which was the very first feature that brought me into the magical world of cinema. Later in my childhood, *Transformers* opened my eyes to the vast possibilities of a potential career in filmmaking. My love affair with movies truly began when I saw *Avatar.* James Cameron’s visually stunning epic confirmed my belief that I wanted to enter the film industry, and make movies for the rest of my life.

 One of my earliest memories of going to the movies is tagging along with my family to watch *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. I was about eight years old when *Spirit* came out, and when I walked out of the theater I was completely mesmerized by the movie. All I wanted to do was watch it again and again. All I could think of for the next couple days was *Spirit* and how much fun I had while watching it. After watching the movie my imagination began to soar like it never had in the past. I began to daydream constantly, and I would escape the mundane life we can live in by entering different made-up worlds. When I was really young, I had lots of spare time that I would spend day dreaming about farfetched fantasy lands filled with fire-breathing dragons and magical elves. My rapid expansion of imagination would not have had been possible without watching *Spirit*. The one aspect of the movie that played the biggest part in kick starting my creative process was the beautiful score that was that was written by Bryan Adams and Hans Zimmer.

 Throughout *Spirit*, the score brings you into the beautiful landscape of the Wild West. Part of the reason why I fell in love with *Spirit* was the fact that the music was so on point throughout the entire movie. The music helped the movie by adding emotional depth, whether it was sorrow or happiness, that could not have had been attained if the music was not so strong. Listening to the music in conjunction with the movie lifts your heart and allows you to truly experience the movie in a completely new fashion. Listening to Bryan Adam’s “Run Free” while watching Spirit on screen finally running home after months of captivity, you can almost physically feel something inside your chest. The song creates such a stir within you that could only be expressed through the use of both music and visuals. After watching the *Spirit* I realized something that would forever change the way I watched movies: a movie cannot capture the heart of the audience without music. Music adds an aspect to the movie that cannot be replaced. To this day if I’m ever in the imaginative mood I plug in my headphones, listen to *Spirit’s* score, and enter a whole new world.

 *Spirit* was the very first movie in my lifetime that I was deeply attached to. As soon as I got the movie on DVD, I watched it regularly for the next couple weeks. This marked a pivotal moment in my life because it was the first time that without knowing it, I began to start to develop passion for movies that would last a lifetime. When I was about ten years old I was very fortunate that my family ordered Netflix. Netflix gave me an abundance of opportunity that allowed me to have any movie I wanted right in my fingertips. I quickly began to watch at least one movie a week, and sometimes if time allowed I would watch up to three movies in one weekend. *Spirit* introduced me to a universe that I never knew existed. Although it wasn’t the first movie that I had ever watched, it was the first movie to introduce me to the endless possibilities that can be achieved within one single movie. After my list of movies that I’ve watched piled up very fast, I realized that not only had I become immersed in the world of spirit, but also the world of the cinema. The catalyst to this can be traced all the way back to the first time I watched the movie *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*.

 *Spirit* introduced me to vast world of movies, and I quickly began to watch a ton of films. However, sometimes I felt as if I was watching movies senselessly. I just watched movies because I enjoyed watching movies. I had yet to feel another emotional connection with a movie similar to what I had experienced when I first saw *Spirit.* It’s as if movies could entertain me, but nothing more. I could not find out more about myself or the world around me through movies. This all changed in 2007, when the movie *Transformers* was released. It was just a simple action movie, yet *Transformers* carried so much power and influence in it that would forever change who I am. Instantly, a new found love grew in my heart. I loved the way that the movie caused my mind to race, legs to shake, and heart to pound. It was a mind and body experience that gave me both chills and thrills. I could feel the blood pumping through my veins and adrenaline rushing through my peripheral nervous system as I watched the action scenes unfold before my eyes. Right then and there I could feel the power of the movie changing me.

 While for many people exact memories of life events may fade over time, I still remember the exact moment I first saw the trailer for the new up-and-coming movie, *Transformers*. I was with my father in the movie theater, and we were going to see *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Unfortunately, a year later when *Transformers* came out for various reasons I never had the opportunity to watch it in theaters. It was a while before I was actually able to see the movie because I had to wait for it to be released to DVD. I can still vividly remember the moment when I first put the *Transformers* DVD inside my Blu-ray player. As the title credits for the film began to fade onto my screen I got goose bumps. I could already tell that I was in for an amazing ride. Halfway through the movie I knew that this wasn’t the typical movie that I would just watch, enjoy, and then forget; no, this movie heightened my passion for movies in a way I never thought was possible. Once again the music was orchestrated so beautifully to tie in with the movie that I clearly remember the rush of excitement coursing through every part of my being as I lost myself in the events that were unfolding right before my very eyes. I could scarcely believe what I was watching. I was on the edge of my seat completely engulfed in this imaginative universe where transforming robots are fighting to save the human population. As soon as the credits rolled by I sat back in sheer awe. I watched it every day for the next three days. While I reflected on the pure action and excitement present within *Transformers,* I began to fall in love with everything about movies, from the characters to the story to the music to the actors. The way that the story was told, the action sequences, and my emotional tie with the characters made me fall in love with the movie because I can relate so much to the main character. I felt that watching him succeed made me succeed. I soon realized that my first love for a movie franchise was born.

 *Transformers* was the first movie that really introduced me to the business of making movies. I became a fan of the franchise and my whole world started to revolve around my love for *Transformers*. I talked about it endlessly with friends, my computer backgrounds featured *Transformers*, even my screen saver was *Transformers* themed. I quickly began doing research about cinema, and I read reports that kept me up to date on news or rumors regarding the sequel to *Transformers*. Additionally, I began to do research on the director, Michael Bay, because I was interested in what he had to say about his plans for the sequel. He wanted the theme of the second movie to be darker, and a Hero’s journey where he begins to doubt whether he should continue to fight or not. When I read that, I thought that it would be so much fun to create a story that so many people love. This all occurred close to the end of 8th Grade, and at the time many people began to ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. No school subject interested me; I was terrible at math, science was not for me, I hated the books I read in English class, although I do enjoy reading books just not the ones assigned from school, and I just felt that there was no profession out there for me. For some reason, filmmaking completely escaped my mind until one day when I was watching *Transformers*, for about the fifteenth time, I began to think of different methods/action sequences/shots that I would have done if I was the director, and then it instantly hit me; I knew what I wanted to be: a film director.

 Soon after I began to conduct my research on how to become a film director and what schools had well respected film programs. As a sophomore I didn’t think that much of college but in the back of my mind I knew where I was going to apply. Each time I read information about the film industry, the risks involved scared me. Few ever make it to Hollywood, and if you do make it, it is not certain that you will stay there. It is a huge risk where those who are at the top of Hollywood succeed in a huge fashion and those at the bottom may never get a chance to reach to the top. Too often it is who you know and not what you know that will determine whether you get a job in Hollywood. This provides a huge challenge to me because I need and opportunity to show my skillset, and without contacts in the business it will be hard to find a good platform to demonstrate my ability. The thought of this scares me because I worked very hard throughout High School hoping and dreaming that I would attain success in the future. However, one movie would completely change my mindset and instill faith in myself that this was my calling.

 Two weeks prior to the release of *Avatar* I read an article that talked about how this movie would change the way movies are made. I quickly dismissed this as meaningless hype, but later on I would soon discover that I was completely incorrect. *Avatar* is a movie unlike anything else in that it brings you to into a completely made up universe with and extremely hostile environment that can be tamed through respect. *Avatar* soon became the highest grossing movie of all time, making $2.7 billion dollars.

In order to make this movie possible it required state of the art filmmaking. The world of Pandora is what captured my heart and with it captured my desire to pursue a career in film at all costs. When I size up my career goals for life I see clearly now that there is nothing I would rather do that make movies. I want to be a part of the future of movies, and leave my stamp on Hollywood whether it is a director, producer, or even a position as small as a camera man. Watching *Avatar* and the behind the scenes footage cemented my desire to pursue a career in film. There is no other work setting where I feel more alive than being on a movie set. I have secondary options and backup plans because of the many challenges a career in film present. However, I don’t feel the same love or passion for any other potential job that I do for filmmaking.

When I walked out of the movie theater after seeing *Avatar* I told myself that I would stop at nothing to become a filmmaker. Until I have exhausted all of my opportunities and chances, I will continue to persevere and make my dream of entering the film industry a reality. To this day I continue to fight this battle. I’m currently working on my application for the FSU Film School, and soon after I will begin working on a script that will be a short movie. This short movie will be used for separate applications that will be sent to other film schools. Although I want to stay at FSU and it’s my dream to study Film Production at this great university, I must apply to other schools because there’s no guarantee that I will be accepted to FSU’s Film School. However, one thing is for certain, I will never stop trying to find ways to join the Film Industry and I will always try my hardest and do my very best to prove to those around me that there is nothing more I enjoy doing than making movies.

Ever since I can remember movies have been a huge part of my life. From the very first time I saw *Spirit,* to watching *Transformers,* and finally *Avatar.* My life would not be the same if these movies did not exist. Before these movies, I was lost in what in what I wanted to be when I grew up and my future was shrouded in mystery, but now I have a clear vision of what I want my future to be like. These movies have given my life a sense of purpose; it’s given me a direction to aim towards a life-long goal and dream, which is to ultimately win an Academy Award for Best Picture and Best Director. Few people understand the gravity of movies because most people don’t see the affects that movies have. I wish nothing more in my life than to be able to enter a career where I can make movies. For other people it may be that watching *The Hunger Games* or *Twilight* sparked them to read books and then for the rest of their lives they enjoy reading books, and who knows maybe even then that person may write a book of their own. *Avatar* started an environmental movement that James Cameron continues to pursue and it brought attention to the damage we as humans are causing to the Earth. From watching movies people have fallen in love with franchises, for me its Transformers, and for others it maybe Batman, or the Avengers. Movies can influence people to travel to certain areas across the globe that they would’ve never gone too had they not watched a movie that included that area. The possibilities of how one movie can change a person’s life are endless. My passion and love in my life can be traced back to watching movies. In just a total of six hours of screen time my entire world changed and in that time frame I’ve realized my purpose in life, set a life-long goal for myself, and made a dream; all this because I watched three simple movies. Movies are one of the most influential and effective instruments to change the way people live, think, and act because of its ability, accompanied with its power, to be able to change life.

# Works Cited

Bay, M. (Director). (2007). *Transformers* [Motion Picture].

Cameron, J. (Director). (2009). *Avatar* [Motion Picture].

Kelly Asbury, L. C. (Director). (2002). *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* [Motion Picture].