

Letters from our readers

6 October 2011

On “How to fight Wall Street”

The unions and the Democratic Party are seeking to do the same thing with the Wall Street protest as they did in the Wisconsin protests earlier in the year. They will attempt to take over the leadership of the Wall Street protest in order to destroy it.

Brian
Florida, USA
4 October 2011

This rejection of “politics” is part of the movement to reject ideology. Its results are easy to observe in Greece. Spontaneity becomes a fetish. With the rejection of all ideologies coherence disappears from discourse, and from acts. Spontaneous movements now occur but in different directions. They sum to zero. Social inertia is triumphant. In occupying the square the spontaneous moment is exhausted. And without Marxist ideological replenishment, in the square you remain, as they have in Greece.

P.S. Here is a more frightening example of the same lack of ideological clarity. Various liberal groupings, non-Marxist groupings, fake left, etc. have been campaigning against global warming for decades. The first indicator of the approaching ecological crisis was the appearance of a hole in the ozone layer above the Antarctic. And after decades of campaigning (that ignored the imperative to overthrow the capitalist social ordering) we now have a new hole in the ozone layer above the Arctic.

Chris
Ireland
4 October 2011

On “Northwest Detroit residents continue to fight library closure”

Thank you for your strong support for keeping libraries open. There are lots of good quotes in your article and it warmed my heart, as a librarian, to hear how much people love their neighborhood library. It is very important for members of the public to continue to speak up, telling in their own words what the library means to them.

Librarians know their work makes a difference in people’s lives, but it is something difficult to prove in the dollar-for-dollar accountability which now governs everything. It is impossible to put a price tag on the human interactions which take place in libraries. Statistics and formal surveys only tell part of the story.

Librarians are bound to observe high ethical standards and respect confidentiality and user privacy. Everything you ask a librarian is confidential. That’s why it’s important for members of the public to come forth and share their personal perspectives, as they have done in Ms. Halyard’s article.

I worked as a librarian for many years. It was almost a daily occurrence to hear someone say, “I had been searching for hours and I never would have found this information if you hadn’t helped me.” Students quickly learn a librarian is their best friend, and should never hesitate to ask the librarian a question. Librarians are there to help you navigate the difficult straits of information seeking in today’s complex information environment.

Lesley J
Ohio, USA
4 October 2011

On “Toronto International Film Festival 2011—Part 1 : The world at large and closer to home“

Dear David,

3 October 2011

I very much enjoyed the first of your reports from the Toronto International Film Festival, and look forward to reading its follow-ups. Given TIFF's growing significance on the festival calendar—easily the biggest in north America now—it's refreshing to read a less forgiving write-up after a wash of, at worst, overawed unanimity and red carpet fetishism and, at best, a mildly compromisist (or strangely defeatist) attitude from the likes of *Sight & Sound*, that acknowledge the glamour it brings with pained grimaces while also trying to justify celebrities' attendance as a means of bringing in buzz and material investment. At any rate, the festival market is already saturated.

Yesterday, I wrote a piece on the upcoming London Film Festival—which, at a three-hour train journey south, is the closest high-profile festival of its kind to me. The piece takes as its starting point a revealingly misleading advert from the LFF's official partner, American Express, and goes on to question the ticketing process, pricing of tickets, festivals' exclusivity, etc. You can read it here, but if you're pushed for time, a short extract:

In short, nearly half of the “films not to miss at this year's festival” can't possibly be seen unless you've managed to get a ticket—by being a paid BFI member, a festival contributor or an accredited industry or press delegate.

Clearly, at a time when the wealth divide couldn't be any clearer, the BFI (and proud partner American Express) knows to whom it caters.

Film festivals, as social and cultural events, only highlight the vast gulf in social wealth, only highlight who has access to art and who does not have access to art. At the same events, you see the same privileged people giving talks to other privileged people about often mediocre or disappointing films removed from everyday life, bolstered by vague promotional write-ups that try to cash in on some recent precedent. That's just the nature of film exhibition, I suppose... or at least the nature of film exhibition under specific historical conditions.

Thanks for your time, and I hope you're well.

Michael Pattison
UK



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