

Film Tribute: Legendary Film Critic Roger Ebert Passes Away at 70

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 4, 2013 - 3:35pm

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CHICAGO – On Thursday, April 4, 2013, the film industry lost a titan as Roger Ebert succumbed to his long battle with cancer. Far more than just an icon in the film industry, the first film critic to ever win a Pulitzer Prize became so much more than a writer to those who knew him, worked with him, and felt inspired by his unimaginable courage and incredible way with words. Everyone who was inspired by him (which is pretty much everyone who's ever written a movie review) is shaken to the core today but encouraged by the lasting lessons he taught us all. The movie theater is a little darker tonight.

To many, Roger Ebert will be most remembered as the man who invented, with Gene Siskel, the “thumbs up, thumbs down” way of viewing film but that was only a small part of his legacy. At a time when film critics pretty much only existed on the coasts — in New York and Los Angeles — Ebert gave a voice to an entire industry in the Midwest. With his writing for the Chicago Sun-Times and his own site, both on film and later about his own personal battles, Ebert was an inspiration to millions of people over the years. He was a model of professionalism, encouraging young filmmakers through his reviews, backing writers who he believed in, and teaching everyone who read him lessons about how to view the art form that he loved.

He got the job at the Chicago Sun-Times 46 years ago, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1975, the same year he launched “Sneak Previews” with Gene Siskel. He could have moved to New York or Los Angeles, but he never lost his love for the city of Chicago, even bringing a film festival to the state in Ebertfest, which will take place later this month. In the '80s, “At the Movies with Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert” and “Siskel & Ebert & the Movies” changed the way people criticize film around the world. Witty and yet accessible, they redefined the form. When Gene Siskel passed away in 1999, Roger Ebert moved on, continuing to write and report until his cancer returned late in 2012.

Roger Ebert began a battle with cancer in 2002, a fight that would take his voice away from his TV show but didn't stop his need to express himself. Through his site, his continued TV work, and his general presence in the city he loved for years, Roger Ebert never gave up.

No one has influenced me more professionally. Roger Ebert taught me how to write about film and the lessons learned through his talent and his expression for his love of the art form were invaluable. But the amazing thing was how much Mr. Ebert began to influence me personally later in life. He was a model of courage, the person we all hope we can be when faced with not just professional hurdles but the ones that life places in front of us as well. It is one of the greatest honors in my life to call the man a colleague in this city, however briefly, and to know that I was able to tell him how important he was to me in person. He will be deeply, deeply missed but his lessons will never be forgotten.



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