

# Rudeness too common at movies, concerts

Two men were kicked out of a Boston Pops concert last week. Apparently, they started fighting because one of them wouldn't stop talking during the performance. If that's true, getting kicked out was too good for the talker. I'd have him stoned publicly. Or at least forced to listen to "It's Only Rock and Roll." He won't like it.

Is it just me, or have people become more convinced that the importance of whatever they have to say outweighs the interest of a paying audience in hearing it?

Seeing movies or concerts as a kid, I always remember the surroundings as being supernaturally quiet. If we had to say something during a show, we always whispered it, and heaven forbid you make any kind of noise during a concert. Nowadays, it's a totally different ball game.

There are all kinds of people who talk as if other people don't matter. Here's a field guide:

**The Giggly Girl Talker.** These usually travel in packs and are attracted to multiplex theaters. They communicate in signs, strange vocabulary and giggles, all for reasons that have nothing to do with the movie.

**The Extremely Important Conversation Holder.** This busy executive simply has to answer his cell phone right away, in the middle of a darkened theater, and let us all know what he's up to. That nice message from the establishment asking patrons to silence their cell phones means nothing to him. Clearly that doesn't apply in his case; he's way too important.

**The "I Know the Actors Can Hear Me" Talker.** This person, for some strange reason, is convinced that the people on the screen can actually hear her. She tells the characters what to do, warns them about impending danger, encourages them when she thinks they're right, and lets them know when they are wrong.

**The Musical Know-It-All.** Tells us with running commentary, during the softest movements of Mozart, exactly what the woodwind section is doing. A blow-by-blow description, as it were.

**The Macho Talker.** This guy spent 15 bucks of his hard-earned money to take his



OPINION

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date to the movies and wants to build on that good impression. If he's seen the movie before, he'll explain everything to her so she'll see how smart he is. If he hasn't seen it, he'll show off his talent for detecting which shots involve stuntmen, how every special effect is done, and where the continuity problems are.

**The Drunk Concertgoer.** Regrettably shirtless, he's always shouting at the group to play their big hit. Because, of course, they're not going to play it unless he tells them to.

**The "Speak to Anyone But the Almighty" Talkers.** If these people find the sermon uninteresting, or the meditation period too quiet, or the liturgy too boring, they are more than happy to get caught up on the local gossip, do some business or just shoot the breeze. In my own place of worship, I've heard it charitably described as "reverent inattention."

I admit, I'm unusually sensitive to talkers. It always seems like I'm the guy to give people *The Look*, to ask them politely to lower their voices, to contact the usher if they can't be persuaded any other way. And I understand context is important. I can mix it up at "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" with the best of them.

But I still think that talking above a whisper at a concert or film, quiet conversation at a restaurant, or the rest of the crowd at a sporting event, is horribly rude. There's a social contract we all abide by that assumes other people matter as much as we do. That's a good contract to be a part of.

We also recognize that people attend events specifically to hear and see something special. Next time you go to a show, check the name on your ticket stub and see who you're paying to entertain you. It's not going to be the loudmouth behind you.

So please, the next time you're sitting by me, don't shout out who you think really rocks. There's nothing worse than shouting "Earth, Wind and Fire!" in a crowded theater.

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