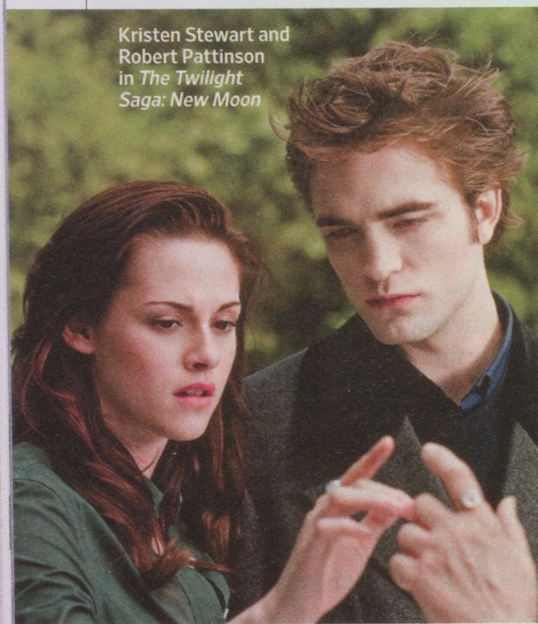


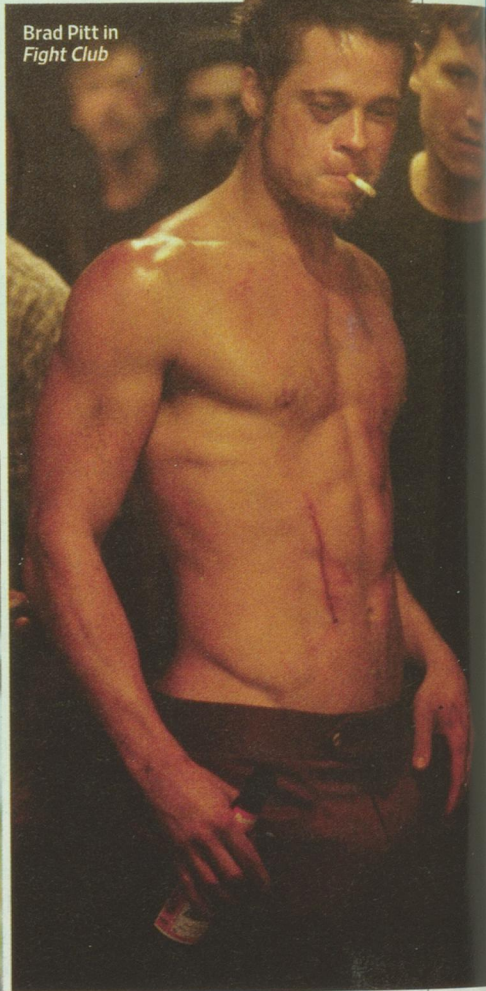
Movies



Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson in *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*



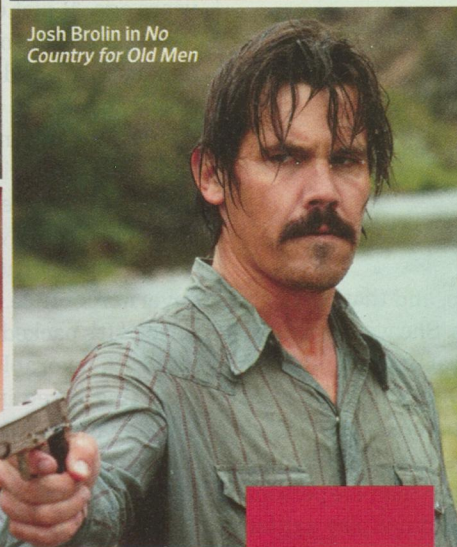
Haley Joel Osment in *Pay It Forward*



Brad Pitt in *Fight Club*



Elijah Wood in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*



Josh Brolin in *No Country for Old Men*

For the Love Of Movies

Lisa Schwarzbaum bids farewell to EW—and shares her thoughts on being a critic, engaging with readers, and the beauty of agreeing to disagree



Lisa Schwarzbaum

FOURTEEN YEARS after the fact, I still occasionally hear from readers angry that I didn't like *Fight Club*. Four years later, I still occasionally receive messages from people upset that I liked *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* too much. Eight weeks since opening day, both lovers and haters of *Les Misérables* still have a thing or two they want to tell me about my review. I've spent 22 years at ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, 19 of them as a critic—a glorious tenure that ends with this issue. And I've heard from hundreds of readers fired up about movies and passionate enough to respond to something I've written in these pages. Often the mail has been gratifying: *I love that too! I hated that as much as you did!* Sometimes the messages have been

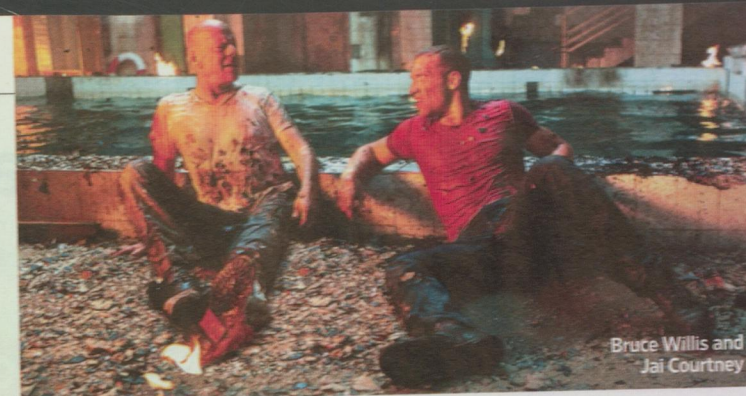
harsh: *You suck! EW should get rid of Lisa!* (Passing fun for the writer but crap for me, *you-suckgrams* have become a depressingly regular aspect of anonymous, online comment-board culture.) The pissed-off wife of a wildly successful producer of high-octane action schlock once sent me a popcorn bucket filled with stones because...well, I'm not sure why, something about throwing stones at her husband's work. Anyway, she wanted to remind me that, while her beloved's pictures rake in billions, my stuff would be gone in 60 seconds. On the flip side, I once received an effing cool email from Josh Brolin telling me, and I quote, "*You can f---ing write!*" and promising to be in my movie. Not that I have any plans whatsoever to write a screenplay.

A writer always wants to feel she's connecting with readers. And certainly, agreeing with me or disagreeing with me is a heartfelt form of engagement. But as I move away from regular criticism in this magazine (my plans include a book, an online project, speaking engagements about popular culture—oh, and a dog!), here's a party favor I want to leave you with: What matters is not if we're in sync about a particular movie but *why*.

My part of the conversation is to use my own experience, analytic ability, aesthetic understanding, points of reference, writing skills, and—lucky me!—EW platform to explain how I come to, say, adore the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy or despair of the hideous *Saw* sensibility. (I even explained carefully why I was giving away the ending of *Pay It Forward*—but some readers went into a hate-mail rage nonetheless. Seen it lately, by the way? I didn't think so. It's still hideous hooey.) Your mission is to read with an open mind, watch movies with an open mind, and use the places where we diverge as inspiration for an ongoing conversation about this ever-changing medium we love together.

Grades, stars, thumbs, and assorted icons are inevitably crude, if handy, quantifiers of quality—they're shorthand, attention-getting invitations to the party. Once we've both shown up, though, let's have a good time pondering both the complexities of *Django Unchained* and the simplicities of *A Good Day to Die Hard*. Because then we'll never run out of things to say to one another.

So keep exploring. Keep responding. And just so you know: The experience of talking with you for two decades has been **A+**.



Bruce Willis and Jai Courtney

A Good Day to Die Hard

STARRING *Bruce Willis, Jai Courtney*

DIRECTED BY *John Moore*

R, 1 HR., 38 MINS.

By *Lisa Schwarzbaum*

You know how it is with John McClane. In *A Good Day to Die Hard*, the yippee-ki-yay *mofo* of an ex-cop, now in his 50s and still embodied (after 25 years) by Bruce Willis, may be what passes for an old guy in action-hero years. But McClane still knows how to...how does he put it? "*Go out and kill a lot of scumbags.*" And how to crack wise. This time he's in Russia to bail his adult son, Jack (Jai Courtney), out of trouble. Along the way, father and son become embroiled in a very Boris Badenov-type pickle involving bad and even worse Russians, and the rather tacky use of radioactive Chernobyl as a tough-guy plot point.

The Australian-born Courtney doesn't make much of Jack. But then, there's not much to make: The kid's got a noggin shaped like the old man's, and he's a hothead off the old block. In the way of workaday flicks built around long-in-the-tooth badasses, *Die Hard 5* leaves room for McClane to make a few jokes about his thinning hair and to rue that he wasn't a better father when his kids were growing up. Oh, boo-hoo. Now go kill some more scumbags. **C**

Critical Mass

A sampling of critics from across the country grade 10 current releases.

	TY BURR <i>The Good Wife</i>	KAREN DUBOIN <i>Pie</i>	LISA KENNEDY <i>The Broken Circle</i>	MIKE LACALLE <i>Star Trek: Into Darkness</i>	WESLEY MORRIS <i>Goodbye Mr. Tomkins</i>	CLAUDIA PUIG <i>Los Angeles</i>	RENE RODRIGUEZ <i>The Way, Way Back</i>	JOSHUA ROTHKOPF <i>From Justin to Kelly</i>	BETSY SHARKEY <i>Los Angeles</i>	ALYNDIA WHEAT <i>People</i>	ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY	CRITICS AVERAGE	
56 UP	A-	B+	-	B+	A-	-	-	-	A	A-	A	B+	A-
AMOUR	A	A+	A	B	A	A-	A	A	A+	A	A	B+	A
THE GATEKEEPERS	-	A	-	-	B+	-	-	A-	A+	A-	A	B-	A
THE HOBBIT...	B	B+	B-	D+	C	B-	B-	C+	C+	B	B+	B+	B-
↑ IDENTITY THIEF	D+	-	-	D	D-	-	D	-	C+	C	B-	B-	C-
LES MISÉRABLES	B-	C-	A-	C-	C+	A	C	B+	B	A-	C	A-	B-
MAMA	-	-	-	B	C-	-	B-	-	C	C-	B	B-	C+
SIDE EFFECTS	B	-	-	B+	B-	-	B+	B-	A	A-	B+	B+	B+
WARM BODIES	B	-	-	C+	C+	-	B-	-	B	B	B	B	B-
ZERO DARK THIRTY	A	A+	A-	A	B	B-	A-	A+	A+	A	A	B+	A-

*EW READER GRADES come from the Front Row, EW's online reader panel. If you'd like to join, go to frontrowpanel.com/join.

THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON: WARNER BROS.; PAY IT FORWARD: WARNER BROS.; FIGHT CLUB: WARNER BROS.; LORD OF THE RINGS: WARNER BROS.; NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN: WARNER BROS.; A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD: FRANK MASH; IDENTITY THIEF: BOB MAHONEY