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# Roger Ebert, Pultizer Prize-winning film critic, dies

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Apr. 5, 2013 NCR Today

American film critic Roger Ebert (1942 ? 2013) died Thursday at age 70 from the effects of salivary gland and thyroid cancer that he had been battling for 11 years.

He started reviewing films in 1967 for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and continued through several television shows (the most popular ?Siskel & Ebert? included fellow critic Gene Siskel, of the *Chicago Tribune*, who died in 1999) and his online journal [1] at the *Sun-Times* when he was no longer able to speak after cancer surgery.

Although he later claimed to be agnostic, Ebert was born and raised a Roman Catholic and served as an altar boy. He was sensitive about the portrayal of Catholicism in film, though he often criticized the most popular, such as Kevin Smith?s ?Dogma,? and praised the most controversial, such as Martin Scorsese?s ?The Last Temptation of Christ.?

His review of Mel Gibson?s ?The Passion of the Christ? [2] is one of his best, though he detested the extreme violence and the Motion Picture Association of America?s rating abilities. He described ?The Passion? as ? ? the most violent film I have ever seen,? labeling the MPAA's R rating as ?definitive proof that the organization either will never give the NC-17 rating for violence alone, or was intimidated by the subject matter. If it had been anyone other than Jesus up on that cross, I have a feeling that NC-17 would have been automatic."

After Siskel died, Ebert teamed up with Richard Roeper, also of the *Sun-Times*. A generation younger, Roeper?s views often annoyed me because they seemed so black and white compared to Ebert?s nuanced approach to film criticism. I wrote Ebert a get-well card after his first cancer surgery in February 2002 and added that Roeper?s style irritated me. He answered a while later with a note saying that he hoped that by now I ?liked Richard Roeper a little more.?

Ebert, who was a recovering alcoholic and who once dated Oprah Winfrey, leaves behind his wife, Chaz Ebert, and millions of fans. On his blog he wrote just three days ago [3] about the recurrence of the cancer:

> *?At this point in my life, in addition to writing about movies, I may write about what it's like to cope with health challenges and the limitations they can force upon you. It really stinks that the cancer has returned and that I have spent too many days in the hospital. So on bad days I may write about the vulnerability that accompanies illness. On good days, I may wax ecstatic about a movie so good it transports me beyond illness.*
>
> *?... So on this day of reflection I say again, thank you for going on this journey with me. I'll see you at the movies.?*

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