Daybreak.

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causative I do not know how they will

potential audience. I did see

certain entertainments, and take

pleasure in their unfolding, be­
because I do not know how they will

end. Very few people re-watch

videos of election night coverage,

for instance, because while such entertain­

ment has certain plastic qualities, the colour-coded com­

puter graphics and interviews with sweaty-lipped politicians are sub­

ordinate to the result. People read
detective novels, not just for the

pleasure in their unfolding, be­

cause I do not know how they will

end.

A convention of reviewing is that a
reviewer should not reveal the en­
ding of an entertainment of this

type. This same convention ap­

plies to films.

Recently Alien 3, a film I had been
looking forward to, was reviewed on the Radio National program
Daybreak. The comments of the
reviewer, whose name I have hap­

ly forgotten, were both banal and

pretentious. She is, of course, not

alone among film reviewers in pos­
sessing these qualities. However, to
disclose the ending of a film of this

nature is not only arrogant, it is a
grotesque discourtesy both to the
artists involved in its making and to
listeners who make up part of its
potential audience. I did see Alien 3
a few days later and was then able to
enjoy its cinematic features, but the
review had indeed managed to

poison my enjoyment of the plot.
Not the least irritating thing about
the incident is that she was actually
praising the film. If she thinks about
it at all, she probably rather smugly
feels that she has provided insights
which may help people like me to a
more perfect understanding of the
movie.

I know several otherwise sensible
people are guided in their entertain­
ment choices by reviews. To make
sure that we don't waste our time
seeing something we might not like,
we allow complete duds like the
Radio National reviewer to steal
some of the piquancy of our aesthet­
ic experience by explaining what is already perfectly clear.

The poltroons who present movies
on television are no better. Bill Col­
lins is the most widely reviled of
these, but he is actually the best. The
comments that are often made about
the brightness of Collins' clothing
reflect more upon a certain mindless
conformity in Australian cultural
expectations than upon his (usually
rather smart) appearance. Collins
compliments his audience by as­
suming that they will be as inter­
ested as he is in the minutiae of

cinema history.

More plausible-looking characters
offer nothing more worthwhile than
their own opinions and a few glean­
ings from standard film guides.
John Hinde, on the ABC, does not
seem as pompous as SBS's David
Stratton, but Hinde tends to outline
even more of the plot. Channel
Seven's Ivan Hutchinson looks so
much like a sad but faithful old dog
that I can hardly bear to watch any
film that I know he is going to intro­
duce. However, I have to admit that
the 'Ask Ivan' column in TV Week
can be compelling reading, full of
questions like: "To settle a bet, is
Jana Wendt the sister of Hannah
Arendt?"; and "Is Gerontion de'­
Anthell, who played Methuselah in
the 1919 version of The Bible, still
alive?"

Bill, John, David and Ivan may be
amiable characters but most people
don't need a savant to anticipate the
details listed in the credits, or to
describe 'arresting visuals' or
'powerful performances'. They are
capable of seeing the virtues and
faults of a film, regardless of
whether it is given the imprimatur
of 'Movie of the Week'.

For those who do feel the need for
such interpretations, the standard of
film criticism in Australia is gener­
ally low. Take, for example, the fourth
paragraph of Evan Williams' recent
review of Village Roadshow's film
returns in The Australian:

The most likely audiences would appear to be imma­
ture adults, fans of Michelle
Pfeiffer, and those interested in
the silent German exp­
resionist cinema of the 1920s.

In the final paragraph of the same
review, he states:

Those most likely to enjoy it will be penguin fanciers, ad­
mirers of Mussolini's ar­
chitectural style, fans of
Pfeiffer, sports car en­
thusiasts, and everyone like­
ly to appreciate in-jokes about German expressionist

To call such writing sloppy would be a compliment.

An acquaintance of mine was a film
reviewer on the main newspaper of
a large Queensland city in the 1960s.
This person had no idea which films
he ought to praise and, since overseas
films took months to arrive in
Australia at that time, he simply
consulted back issues of Time
magazine and borrowed its critical
stance. It may have been comical to
see him draw a salary for such

shameless plagiarism, but unthink­
ning assent to any point of view is
frightening. Too many filmgoers
derf from this person only in that
they are not paid for their failure to
use their critical intelligence.

MICHAEL CONATY would like to see
a media embargo on Lethal Weapon 3.