



Team 4: The Theater Owners of America (TOA)

The TOA is responsible for determining which movies to show at their local community movie theaters. The organization still exists today as the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO).

Task: After each trailer, the TOA will read the reviews provided and briefly discuss if they think the movie would sell tickets in their community, and if it seems worth the risk to screen the movie based on warnings from the MPAA and industry trade journal reviews (on the handout).

Final Report: After a team discussion, the TOA must pick one of the three movies that they intend to show in their theaters. The team must fully explain their methodology and final decision to the class.

What to Watch For: The TOA should consider the appeal of each film as a cohesive and engaging story, the star quality of the actors, and any warnings made in the trailer that relate to how an audience might react to the film. (Discouraged movie theater behavior might include fighting, protesting, rioting, dancing in the aisles, etc.)

Additional Materials: Included in this handout are several excerpts from *Harrison's Reports*, a professional trade journal that published weekly reviews to help independent theater owners determine which movies to show in their theaters.

Excerpts of Film Reviews from *Harrison's Reports*

Rebel Without a Cause (Warner Bros., 111 min.)

Reviewed October 22, 1955

- *"Although it is frequently brutal and shocking in its depiction of juvenile violence, it probably will prove to be an outstanding box office attraction by reason of the fact that it stars James Dean, the sensational young actor...who died tragically several weeks ago in an automobile accident."*
- *"Even hardened moviegoers will be startled by some of the vividly depicted situations, such as the knife duel between Dean and the gang's leader..."*
- *"...the story attempts to make the point that the psychological motivations for their violent behavior stem from the fact that they are denied love, affection, and understanding at home. This point is not valid, for, even though there appears to be a lack of understanding on the part of the parents, the youngsters themselves fail to display traits that deserve audience sympathy."*

Rock Around the Clock (Columbia, 77 min.)

Reviewed March 17, 1956

- *"With rock-and-roll rhythm the current musical craze of the nation's 'teen-agers, this highly entertaining picture should draw them to the box-office in droves, for it features some of the top rock-and-roll artists of the country, singing and playing current hit tunes made popular by them."*
- *"Add to this a group of talented youngsters who dance like whirling dervishes to the rock-and-roll rhythm and you have an entertainment that is best described in their vernacular as 'cool and crazy,' and that will have movie-goers beating their feet in time with the rhythm, with the possible exception of those who 'just ain't hep!'"*
- *"The musical proceedings are held together by a light-weight but pleasant story..."*

Jailhouse Rock (MGM, 96 min.)

Reviewed October 19, 1957

- *"The Elvis Presley fans undoubtedly will find 'Jailhouse Rock' the type of picture they want to see their idol in because he is given ample opportunity to sing some half-dozen rock-n'-roll songs in a style that seems to make their hearts flutter."*
- *"Although he is far from a finished actor, Presley continues to show improvement and does fairly well in a somewhat unsympathetic characterization."*
- *"The story is synthetic, but it has been given good direction and fits Presley's personality."*