

Two Thumbs Down

James S. Calvin, President
New York Association of Convenience Stores



Our Convention Committee has chosen “Hollywood” as the theme for our annual Trade Show and Convention next year. It will be held May 15-16, 2007, in Syracuse. I hope you will join us.

In starting to explore ways to apply the cinematic theme in decorations, programming, prizes and special activities, I thought it might be fun to show some clips from movies where there are scenes involving convenience stores.

I found that Hollywood producers do find C-stores quite convenient – as robbery targets, havens for lobotomized cashiers, and magnets for society’s rejects.

Whether it’s Brad Pitt committing a hold-up in “Thelma and Louise,” Nicholas Cage knocking off a store in “Raising Arizona,” or a pair of bumbling idiots hatching clever plots in “Clerks” and “Clerks II,” the cumulative portrayal of C-stores on film is appalling.

Now I’m no Pollyanna when it comes to the trade. I’ve been in some disgusting stores, and I know full well the kinds of crazy things that can happen on the overnight shift. But I have also visited a lot of attractive, well-managed stores with friendly, caring clerks. Even though these stores far outnumber the dives, I guess they’re just too boring to make it into a screenplay.

And I’m not disputing that robberies still occur at convenience stores. Of course, if you looked closely, you’d find that due to improved security systems and procedures the frequency is down, and losses and injuries have diminished. But looking closely would ruin the old stereotype that C-stores get robbed all the time. Besides, haven’t you seen that surveillance video on “Dateline NBC”?

I guess that since we tend to attract a predominantly blue-collar clientele, and since we sell some legal products that may be out of fashion with the Hollywood elite, and since it’s hard to break old paradigms, there’s not much we can do directly other than to say “Two thumbs down” from this reviewer for the overall depiction of convenience stores in the movies.

What we *can* do as an industry, however, is renew our determination to give our customers who see those movies a far different, far better, far more positive experience in our stores so they are able to separate the Hollywood myth from the hometown reality.

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