

Mod quad

reviewed by [Matthew Prins](#) in the [June 21, 2000](#) issue

Watching *Time Code* is akin to going into an appliance store and observing a wall of televisions tuned to different channels. Director and writer Mike Figgis divides the screen into four quadrants, each showing a different, but related, 93-minute uncut shot. Is it any good? Let's put it this way:

Review 1: Figgis is much more interested in his idea for a film than he is in creating a story or meaningful characters. I could relate the plot, but if Figgis didn't care a whit about it, why should I? Things do happen in *Time Code*—earthquakes, humorous meetings among film executives, emotional breakdowns—but they keep the audience's attention only for a few minutes.

Review 2: The lack of plot is beside the point. Figgis is disrupting the film medium in a revolutionary way. One small incident reveals his audacious, powerful purpose: I was watching the bottom-left quadrant, where a rather serious situation was about to erupt, when two people behind me started laughing uncontrollably. I was disoriented for a second, but then noticed that the bottom-right quadrant showed a man massaging another man's earlobe. It hit me: though we were watching the same movie, none of us was having the same viewing experience.

Review 3: Figgis is a philosophical poseur. This conclusion is based not only on *Time Code*, but also on Figgis's acclaimed 1995 film *Leaving Las Vegas*. That film had a great, edgy style—eerie compositions, mystic use of the absence of sound to create intensity, terrifyingly arduous performances—and it seemed to be saying something profound, but in the end it managed only to make deterioration look elegant. *Time Code* is even less significant. It offers a laundry list of art flick scenes—with amorous lesbians, casual drug use, pop culture reference, and a downbeat ending—for the purpose of making this point: if you are a married man having an affair with another woman, her lesbian lover might shoot you in the gut.

Review 4: Movies ought not be boring, and *Time Code* is boring. Sure, darting between the four screens is fun for about 20 minutes, but the fun is followed by 70 minutes of tedium. And tedium on four screens is not better than tedium on one.