# Two Thumbs Up for Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide

by Duncan H. Brown

For movie lovers, the news is very good: Leonard Maltin's 2005 Movie Guide for Pocket PC is a slick, well-thought-out product full of features and thoughtful touches that will appeal to both the casual movie consumer and to the full-fledged movie fanatic. I count myself in the latter category: this is now my favorite program on my Pocket PC.

## Over 21,000 movies

Those familiar with the printed version of Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide will feel right at home with the Pocket PC edition. It uses the same rating system and includes the same concise movie descriptions and information. However, the electronic version lists 21,374 titles, as compared to 19,000 titles in the most current printed edition. The electronic Movie Guide also has 5,201 directors and all their movies listed, and 30,594 listings of movie actors, with all the films they were featured in.

Movie information begs for a searchable database, and the Movie Guide delivers this in spades. First, in the Viewing Guide tab the first screen you see when you open the program, you can sort the entire list of movies by the title, year, or rating of the movie. Tap the Up arrow that is to the right of Year to get a list of sorting options (Fig.1).

Next, the Film Finder tab allows you to search for movies by title, year, rating, genre, stars, director, awards, and attributes such as MPAA rating, country, and media (Fig.2). By combining items, you can, for instance, find the films an actor or actress made in a particular genre. For example, search on "Kevin Bacon" and "Science Fiction" and you get two films: *The Hollow Man* and *Tremors,* although I thought *Tremors* was more of a comedy.

Ratings are probably the most useful feature of a movie guide. Maltin rates movies from four stars (excellent) to one and a half starts (not so good). He does not give one star—such movies get a "bomb" rating instead. You may disagree with Maltin's ratings on particular films (as I do on his three stars for Groundhog Day—I'd rate it four stars), but overall it's helpful to have a professional's take on movie titles before you buy or rent them, or even sit down to watch them on TV. If this program saves you from seeing one bomb, it's well on its way to paying for itself.

Another feature in the program is the Movie Manager tab (Fig. 3). Think of it as your movie database; here you enter information on all the movies you own on videotape,



Fig. 1: The viewing guide lists all movies, or only those in a category; for more complex searches, click on "Film Finder."



Fig. 2: Film listings show title, director, year, country, running time, content rating (PG, PG-13, etc.), category, rating, and a brief summary. The Starring tab shows the actors in the movie.



Fig. 3: Movie Manager keeps track of all your movies. You can add comments, your own ratings, and keep track of who you lent a movie to and when they promised to return it.

DVD, or laserdisc. You can append your own ratings to them, add comments, and track the location of the film (on loan to a friend, for instance and when he's supposed to return it). You can even mark which films in your collection you've seen. Finally, you can categorize your films, and even add categories if you're unhappy with the ones you're offered by the program. The database of your movie collection is backed up via ActiveSync each time you connect to your PC.

Still another capability is the Movie Events tab. It includes Film Premieres—what's opening, and what has opened in the past two months, and what will open in the next month, Film Festivals—listings of the two previous months and the next five months, and DVD Releases—including the previous two months and a month into the future. This information is downloaded and updated from the LandWare Web site and synchronized with your Pocket PC via ActiveSync.

I'm always watching to see what new movies are being released. I want to know what I'll be lusting after. The Movie Guide is great for this, even better than scanning the sometimes sketchy information in newspapers or on Web sites.

Likewise, I'm always keeping a weather eye on what movies are making it to my local video rental store. Video stores provide lists of new films, but the lists seem to be focused only on the most popular and commercial films. The Movie Guide is far more complete, and therefore far more helpful. With Pocket PC in hand, I'm equipped to maximize the value of my time at the video store.

## Best film recommendations

Would you like further recommendations on movies to see? Movie Guide has collected votes from more than 100,000 movie-goers on the best films available in a plethora of genres. You can peruse the 247 films voted most popular of all time. You can also see the movies voted most popular from the 1930s, 1940s, and so on up to the 1990s. Genres include the most popular action films, comedies, romances, dramas, musicals, science fiction, westerns, and family films. A total of about 50 films are listed in each of the "most popular" categories. This is a rich and useful tool for exploring unfamiliar films at the video store.

## Two thumbs up!

Landware boasts that the Movie Guide takes only 1/3 of the storage space of other movie guides, due to use of advanced compression technology. It occupies 3.6 MB and can be installed on an SD or CF card, as well as in main memory. However they do it, it's a compact, well-thought-out, wonderful tool for movie lovers.

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide for Pocket PC is priced at $19.95 ($24.95 for the CD-ROM version) and works with Pocket PC 2002 or later devices. The commercial version, which includes a free 14-day trial of the full software, can be downloaded from the LandWare Web site (www.landware.com/movieguide/). The only danger associated with trying this program is that you'll fall in love with it during the trial period and have to buy it before it expires! ■