

# Q CONSUMER

## Coming soon ...a rip-off at your theater

**W**hen Todd Mark takes his wife Lucy and their four-year-old daughter Katie to the movies near their home in Atlanta, three tickets cost him \$22. Once inside, Mark forks out another \$11 for snacks.

"I don't mind the price of the tickets, but when I see the prices at the concession stand I think it's ridiculous," Mark, a 33-year-old public relations executive, told Q.

To expose the rip-off, Q reporter **Philip Smith** posed as a movie theater owner and contacted wholesalers who supply cinemas with snacks - and we discovered some scandalously high profits. Here are his shocking findings...

**POPCORN:** The wholesale price for popcorn is \$12 for 50 pounds.

That's enough to make 300 small bags, which means that popcorn in the bag that he charges \$3.75 for costs him just 4 cents. That's a mark-up of 9,375 percent. That's not an error. That's 9.375 percent.

**SODA:** In a supermarket you can

purchase a 65-oz bottle of Pepsi for \$1.25.

Theater owners get five gallons of Pepsi syrup for \$45 wholesale.

That's enough to make 500 small sodas, which means the Pepsi in a small, 12-oz soda - which sells for \$2.75 - cost the theater owner just 10 cents. • Profits increase with size - a 32-oz cup sells for \$3.25 and a 44-oz cup sells for \$3.75. Keep in mind your cup is filled with ice. Average mark-up for theater soda: 2,650 percent.

**WATER:** Wholesale cost for bottled water is \$6.50 for a case of 24.

When the theater owner sells bottles \$3 each, it means he's paying about 27 cents per bottle. The mark-up: 1,200 percent. **PRETZEL:**



A king-sized pretzel costs \$3.25 at the movies. Wholesalers sell them for 50 cents each. That's a king-sized mark-up of 600 percent.

**CANDY:** Wholesalers sell 21 packets of Reese's Pieces for \$13.39 or 63 cents for each packet. Theater owners sell them for \$3.25 per packet. That's a difference of \$2.62, a mark-up of 500 percent.

Wholesalers sell 19 packets of M&Ms for \$17.86, which means theater owners are paying 94 cents a pack and selling them for \$3.25 per pack. The mark-up on these is 350 percent. At Taco Bell, nachos sell for \$1.49. Theater owners sell nachos for \$3.75. The mark-up for nachos is 250 percent.

Noted film critic Michael Medved told Q: "It's bad enough that movie audiences are having to pay 10 bucks to see some of the terrible movies they're making these days, but now they're being ripped off at the concession stand. But look - you've got to remember one of the basic rules of the American economy. There's a sucker born every minute, as P.T. Barnum said."