

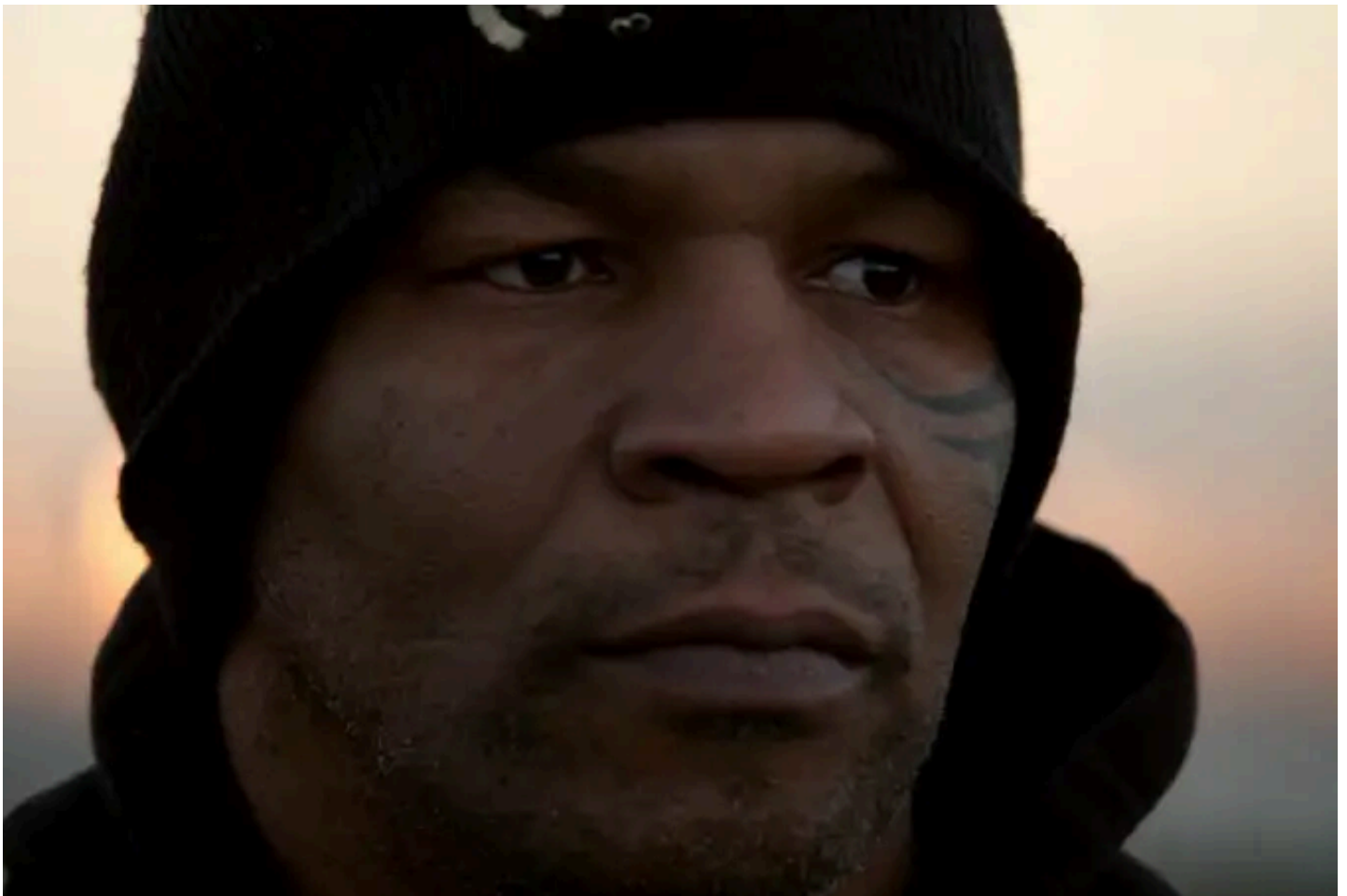
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Mar 13, 2015 12:26am PT

Film Review: 'Champs'

Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Bernard Hopkins are the subjects of this slick but cliched boxing documentary.

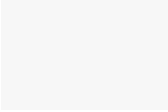
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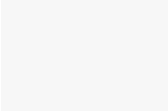
As blunt and methodical as the now-soured sweet science that is its subject, director [Bert Marcus](#)' "Champs" is the moviegoing opposite of a prize fight, a slick but not particularly stylish documentary that actually becomes more focused and energized in the late rounds. With the long-delayed Floyd Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao welterweight bout looming in early May, the timing is the best it can be for a limited Gotham release (in concert with VOD) of this clearly sincere but achingly cliched look at what's good and bad about the sport and the society that sanctions it. Nearly a year after its debut at Tribeca, the item is best suited to cablers and other smallscreen outlets.

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It's no secret that boxing history is riddled with rags-to-riches stories in which a precious few talented and determined young men, more often than not plucked from poverty and molded by strong father figures, rise to the top of the sport, only to lose it all to greedy hangers-on and that old standby, "bad advice." This, in essence, is what happened to both Evander Holyfield and [Mike Tyson](#), and Marcus spends the first third or so of the film alternating between tried-and-true talking heads and unnecessary slo-mo re-enactments to illustrate the extreme poverty in which they (as well as Bernard Hopkins) grew up.

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While Tyson and Holyfield are making waves as young, successful fighters, Hopkins is waylaid by serving five years of an 18-year prison sentence, having been convicted of nine felony convictions by the age of 17. Nevertheless, the pic hits its archival stride by the time of Hopkins' 1988 release — a fact the curious viewer will have to research, as such milestones, as well as vintage televised fight sequences, are frustratingly undated.

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Woven into the fabric of what becomes a then-he-fought-him, then-he-fought-him highlight-reel narrative are ruminations by various trainers, journalists, promoters, biographers and academics about the social and financial inequality that informs the sport. As the three men rise to fame and fortune, the pic becomes most eloquent in its examination of how boxing's unregulated Wild West atmosphere puts boxers at great personal and financial risk. Today, the still-active Hopkins advocates for change in this arena, while Tyson comes across as fervently repentant and Holyfield ruefully philosophical.

The roster of celeb fight fans include Mark Wahlberg, Denzel Washington, Ron Howard, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Spike Lee and Mary J. Blige, but their infrequent appearances suggest they were engaged more for window dressing than for substantive insight. Tech package is technically overachieving without attaining an especially evocative atmosphere, but Marcus and his team make up in substance what they fall short of in style. Coming full circle in the current events cycle, there's a brief mention of the current astronomical worth of Mayweather and Pacquiao that, in light of the upcoming match-up, suggests the battered sport of pugilism has a long way to go to right its numerous wrongs.

Read More About: Bert Marcus, Mike Tyson

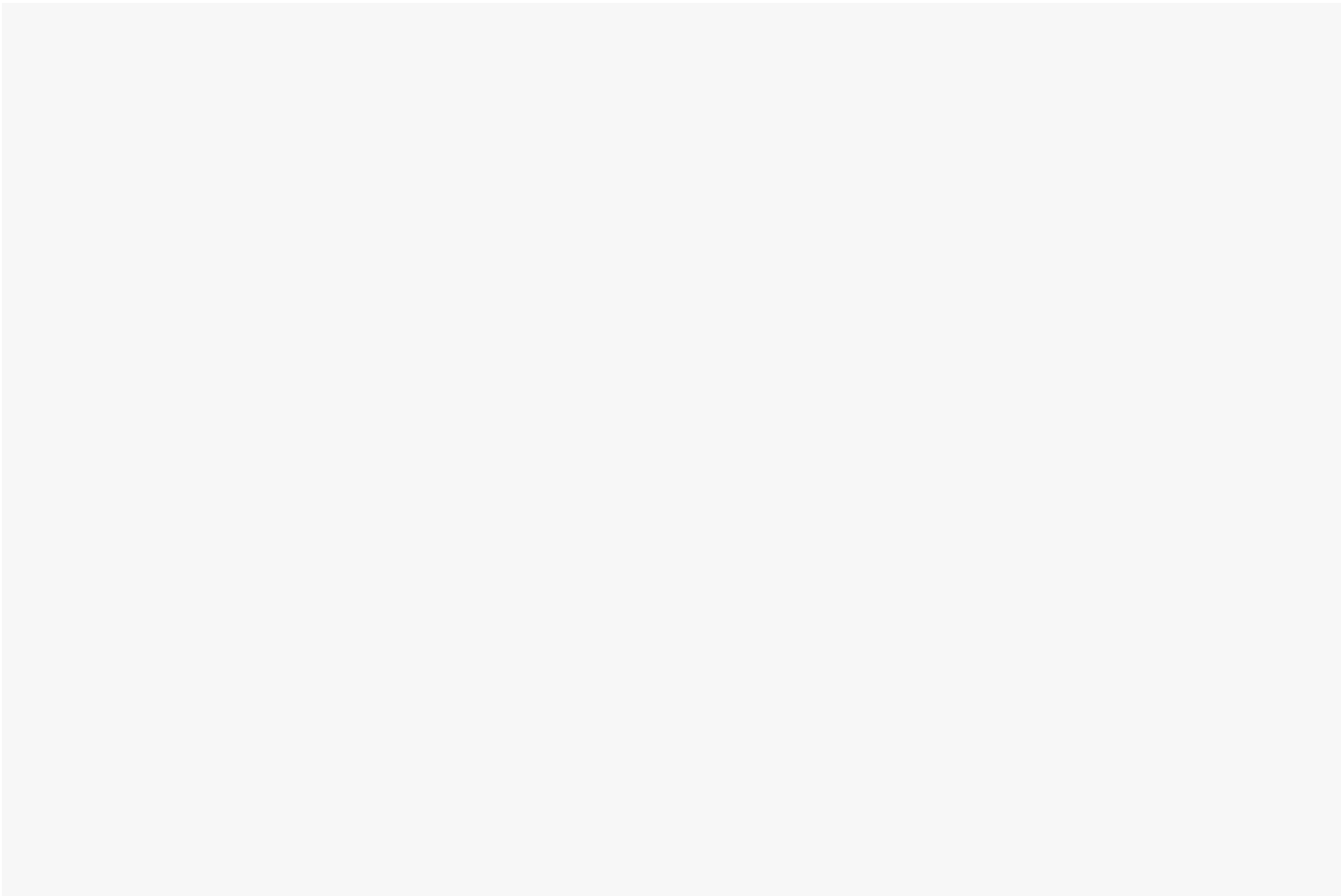
Film Review: 'Champs'

Reviewed online, Sydney, March 13, 2015. Running time: 85 MIN.

Production: A Starz/Amplify release of a Bert Marcus presentation and production. Produced by Mike Tyson, Mario Lopez, Kiki Tyson, Marcus, Grant Jolly.

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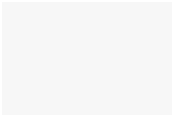
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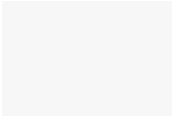
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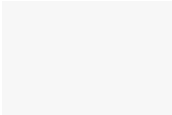
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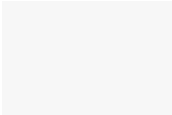
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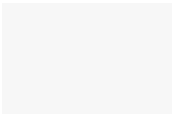
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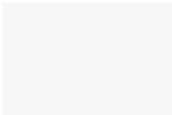
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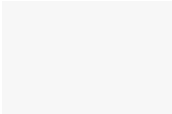
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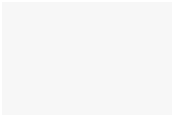
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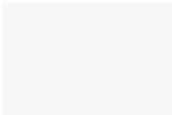
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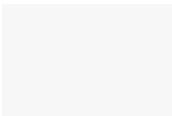
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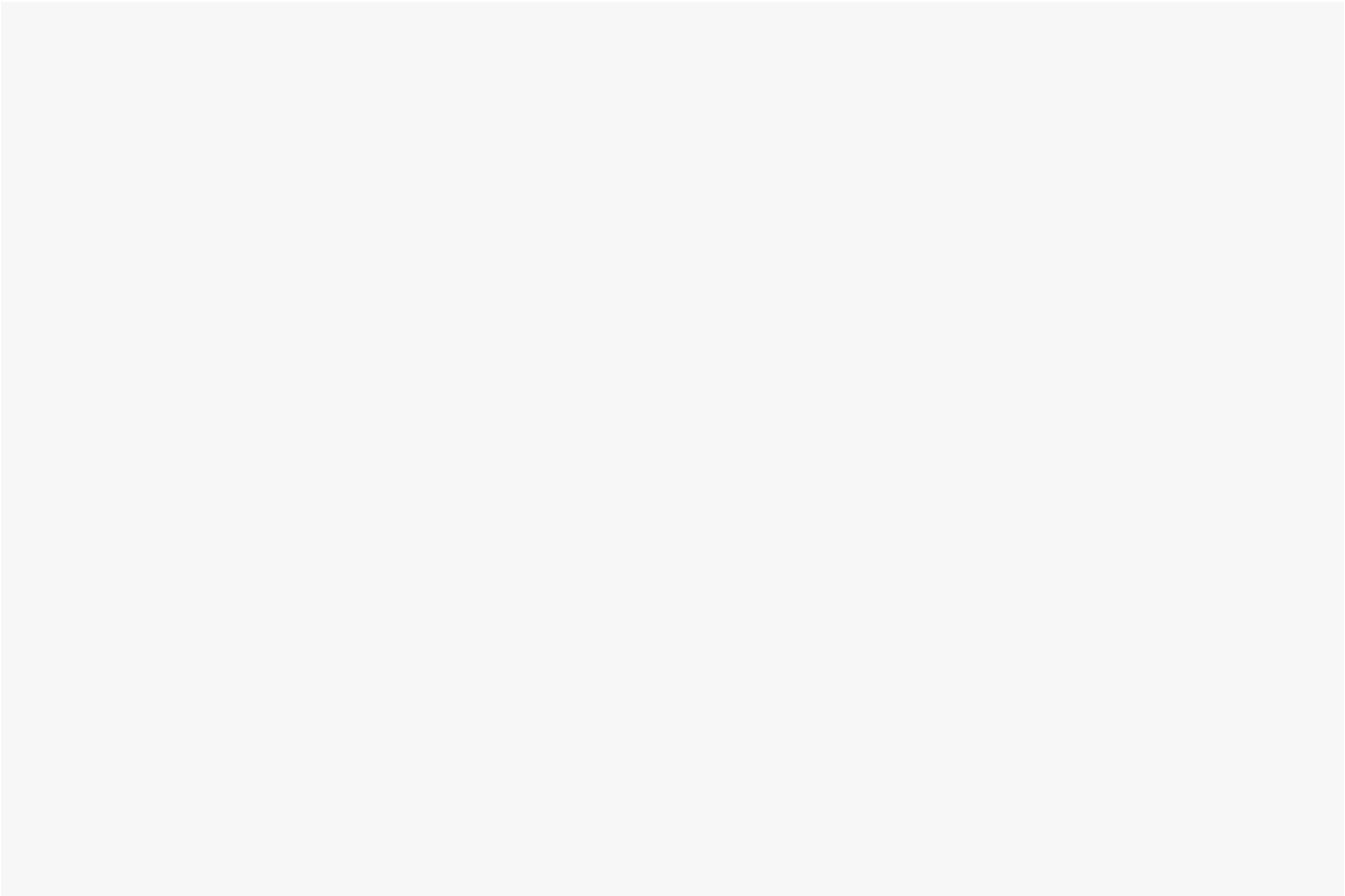
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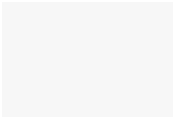
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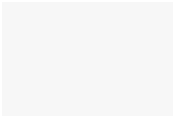


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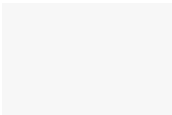


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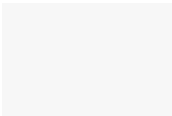
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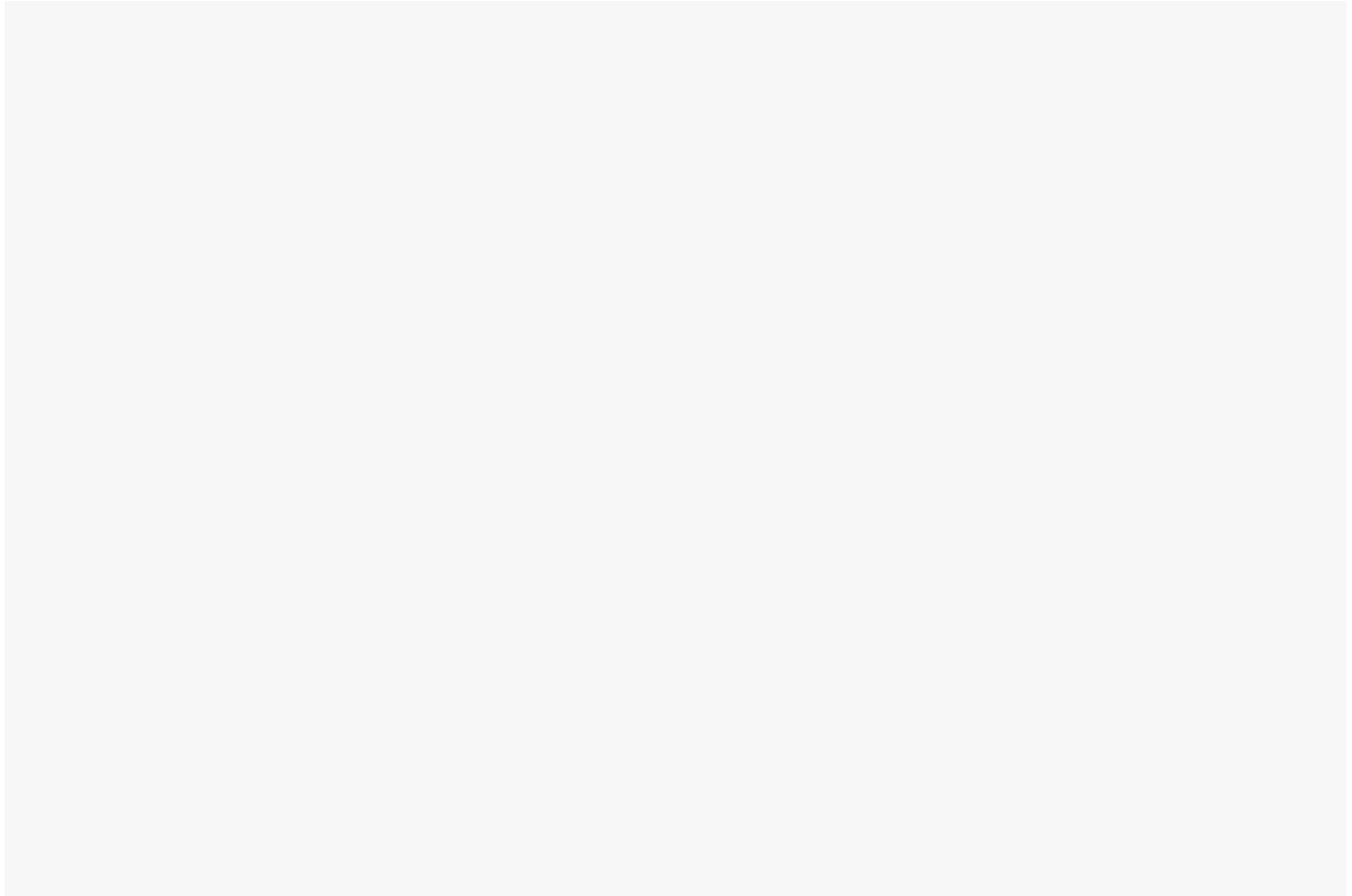
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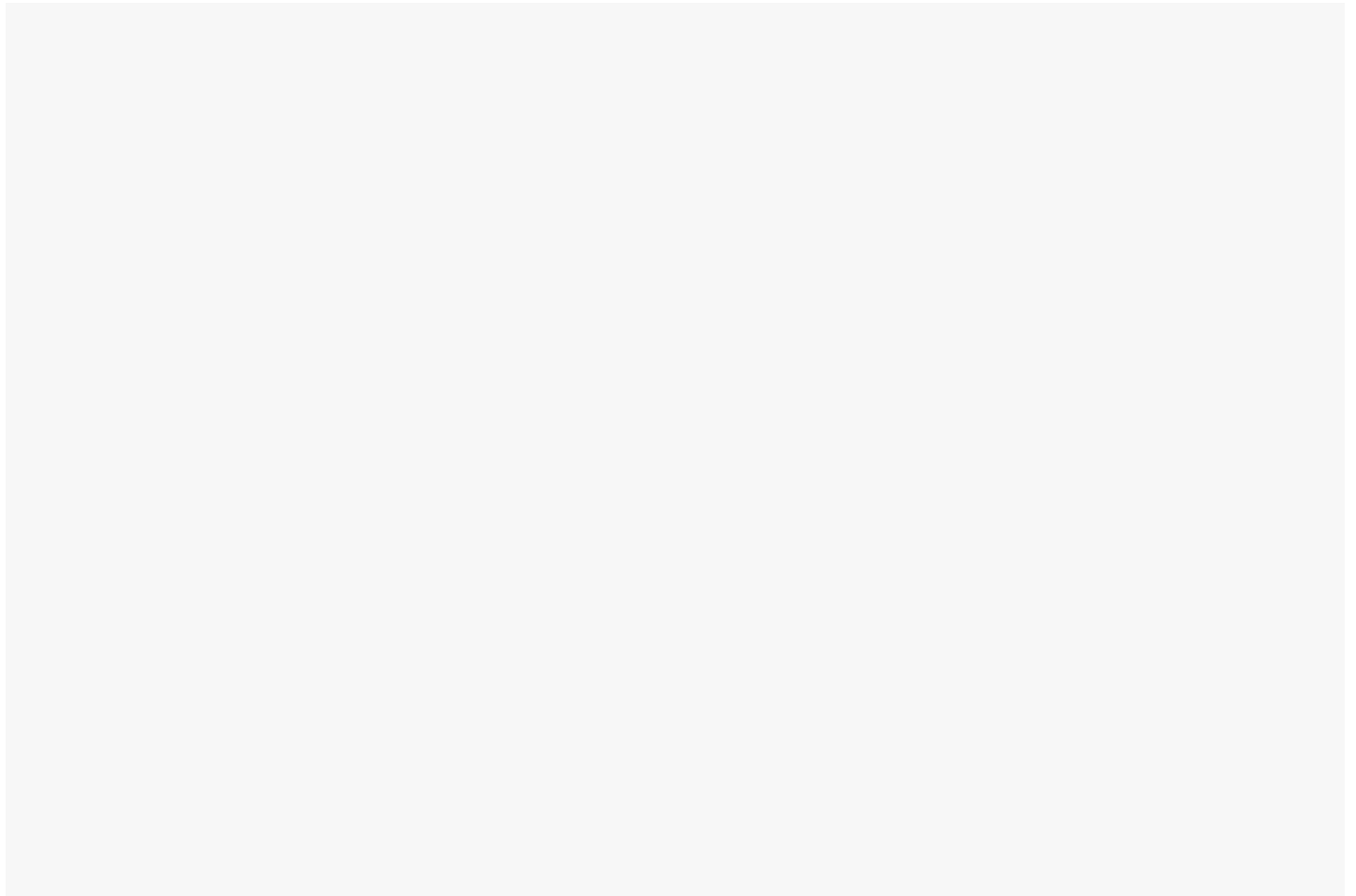
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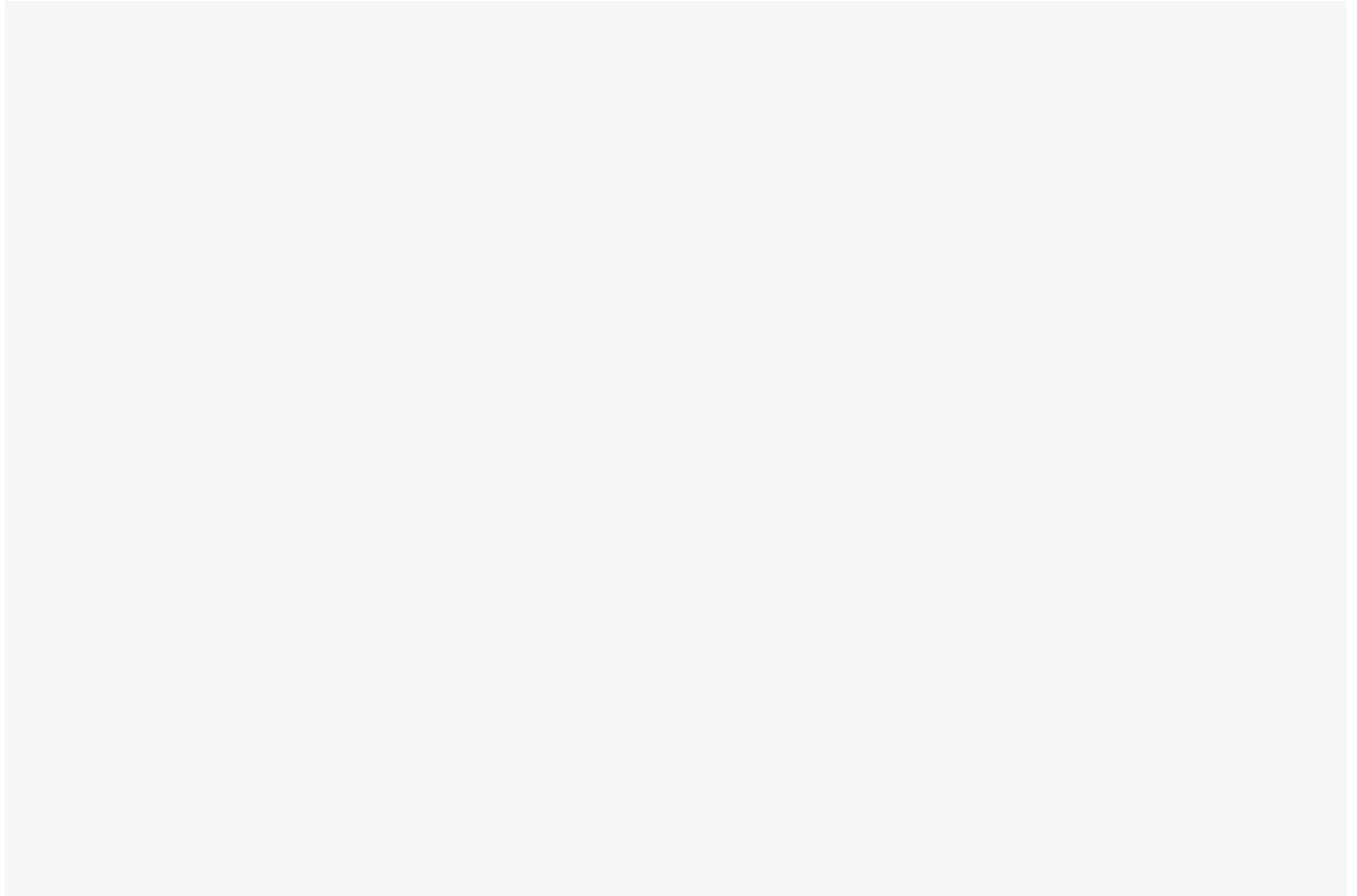
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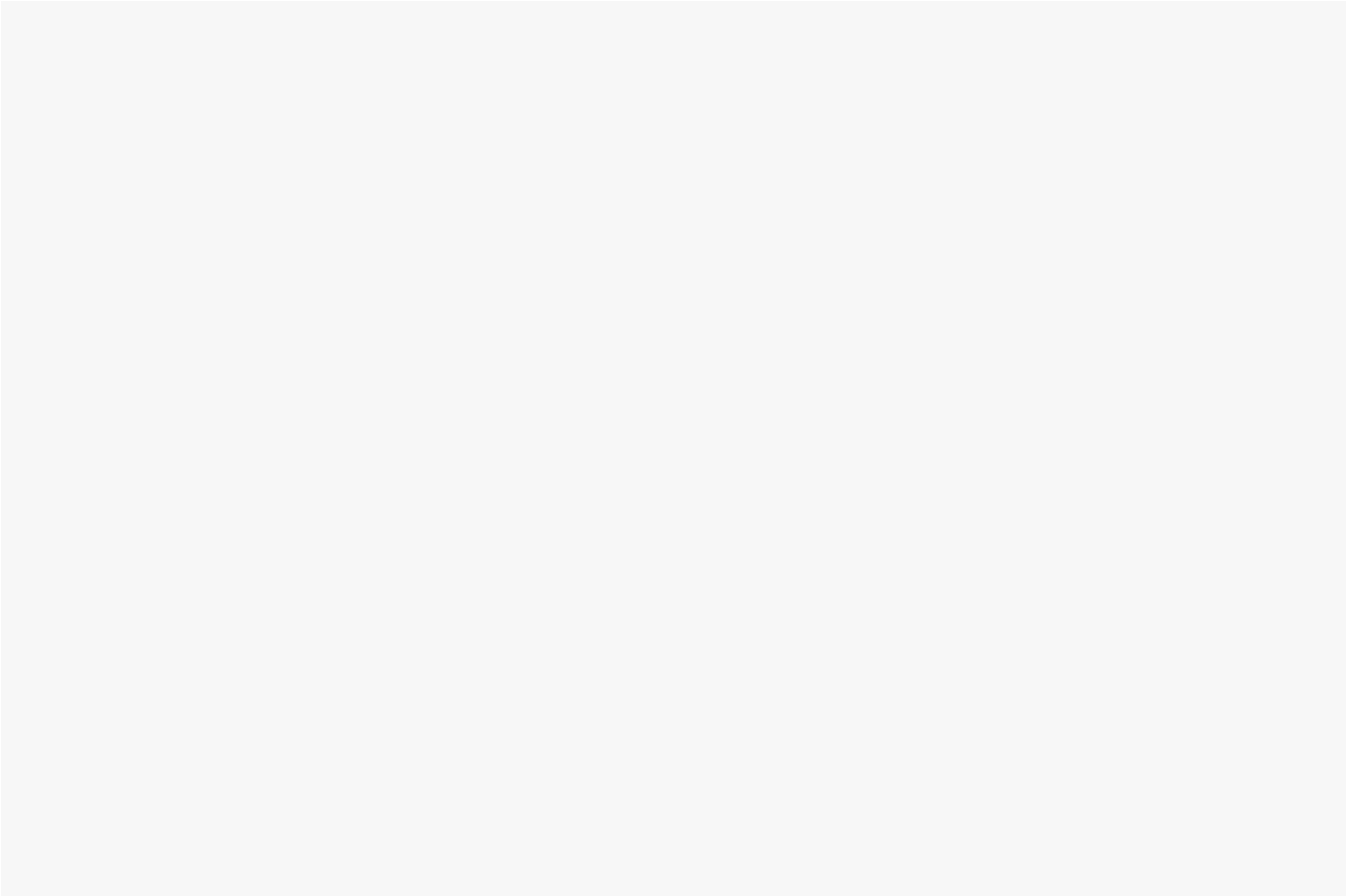
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