

Box Office Power Rankings: Critics and Audiences Align

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 17 September 2008 02:12

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past 18 months about the death/irrelevance of film criticism in print media, as newspapers scaled back their movie coverage and Premiere stopped publishing a print

edition.</p> <p>The refrain has been that movie critics are out-of-touch and elitist, that they don't reflect the values and tastes of audiences, etc., etc.</p> <p>While that might appear

correct when Bangkok Dangerous tops the box office (as it did the first weekend in September), the truth is a little more complicated. Numerous (mostly unscientific) studies have

found a correlation between box-office performance and critical reception. (For example: Slate.com/id/2194532/.)</p>

<p>Don't read a cause-and-effect relationship into this and claim that audiences follow critics -

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that criticism matters because it affects audience behavior. Instead, let's just note that audience behavior and critical reception often align.

For instance, the top movie at the box office this weekend was the Coen brothers' *Burn After Reading*, followed by Tyler Perry's *The Family That Preys*, the decades-late Pacino/De Niro thriller *Righteous Kill*, and *The Women*. Check those opening movies' Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic scores, and you'll see a pattern. Whether you're looking at gross or two measures of critical evaluation, they follow the exact same order. Freaky.

Box Office Power Rankings balance box office and critical reception to create a better measure of a movie's overall performance against its peers than gross receipts alone. The weekly rankings cover the 10 top-grossing movies in the United States for the previous weekend. I assign equal weight to box office and critical opinion, with each having two components. The measures are: box-office gross, per-theatre average, Rotten Tomatoes ([RottenTomatoes.com](http://www.RottenTomatoes.com)) score, and Metacritic ([Metacritic.com](http://www.Metacritic.com)) score.

Why those four? Box-office gross basically measures the number of people who saw a movie in a given weekend. Per-theatre average corrects for blockbuster-wannabes that flood the market with prints, and gives limited-release movies a fighting chance. Rotten Tomatoes measures critical opinion in a binary way. And Metacritic gives a better sense of critics' enthusiasm (or bile) for a movie.

For each of the four measures, the movies are ranked and assigned points (10 for the best performer, one for the worst). Finally, those points are added up, with a maximum score of 40 and a minimum score of four.

For more Box Office Power Rankings, visit [CultureSnob.com/bopr](http://www.CultureSnob.com/bopr).

Culture Snob is the Web site of *Reader* Managing Editor Jeff Ignatius.

Box Office Power Rankings: September 12-14							
Box Office Ranks			Critics' Ranks		Rank		
Gross	Per Theater	Rotten Tomatoes	Metacritic	Total	1	2	3
10 (\$19.1M)	9 (\$7.2K)	8 (78)	8 (62)	35	<i>Burn After Reading</i>	-	<i>Tyler Perry's The Family That Preys</i>
9 (\$17.4M)	10 (\$8.4K)	7 (52)	5 (51)	31	-	<i>The Dark</i>	

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Knight

1	4 (\$4.1M)	6 (\$1.9K)	10 (95)	10 (82)	30
4	Tropic Thunder	2	6 (\$4.2M)	4 (\$1.4K)	9 (84)
9 (71)	28	5	Righteous Kill	-	8 (\$16.3M)
8 (\$5.2K)	3 (23)	3 (37)	22	6	The House Bunny
5	5 (\$4.2M)	5 (\$1.5K)	5 (40)	6 (55)	21
7	Traitor	3	2 (\$2.1M)	3 (\$1.1K)	7 (52)
7 (60)	19	8	7 (\$10.1M)	7 (\$3.4K)	2 (10)
2 (27)	18	9	Death Race	8	1 (\$2.1M)
2 (\$1.0K)	4 (38)	4 (42)	11	10	Bangkok Dangerous
4	3 (\$2.6M)	1 (\$1.0K)	2 (10)	1 (24)	7