

Box Office Power Rankings: How Politics Played

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 08 October 2008 02:25

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In this campaign season, what can we learn from the performances of *An American Carol* and *Religulous* ?

The easy conclusion is that audiences aren't real keen on such aggressively political material, with the two movies finishing ninth and 10th, respectively, in the weekend's overall box office. The second easy conclusion is that conservatives are slightly hungrier for entertainment than people who don't like religion.

Neither is necessarily correct.

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While these two movies brought up the rear here in box office, at least they finished in the top 10, unlike fellow new releases *Blindness*, *Flash of Genius*, and *How to Lose Friends & Alienate People*. All of those opened in more theatres than *Religulous*, and all but *Flash of Genius* opened in more than *An American Carol*.

As for the conservative and whatever-Bill-Maher-is divide, *Religulous* had the second-best per-theatre average in the top 10.

An American Carol did better only than *Burn After Reading*, which had been out for three weekends.

Yet that's not necessarily significant. Critics were far kinder to Maher's anti-religion documentary than the the proudly conservative satire of David Zucker, which garnered worse reviews than anything else in our rankings.

That might mean that movie critics hate God *and* conservatives.

Or you could add it all up and conclude that pandering to right-wingers isn't enough; they wanted something better than *An American Carol*.

About Box Office Power Rankings

Box Office Power Rankings balance box office and critical reception to create a better measure

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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) score, and Metacritic (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 . Culture Snob is the Web site of *Reader Managing*
Editor Jeff Ignatius.

Box Office Power Rankings: September 26-28

Box Office Ranks

Critics' Ranks

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Rank	Movie	Last Week	Gross	Per T
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[Rotten Tomatoes](#)

[Metacritic](#)

1	<i>Appaloosa</i>	-	6 (\$5.1M)
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1	<i>Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist</i>	-	8 (\$11.3M)
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3	<i>Beverly Hills Chihuahua</i>	-	10 (\$29.3M)
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4	<i>Eagle Eye</i>	1	9 (\$17.7M)
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5	<i>Religulous</i>	-	1 (\$3.4M)
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6	<i>Burn After Reading</i>	1	4 (\$4.1M)
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7	<i>Lakeview Terrace</i>	3	5 (\$4.6M)
8	<i>Fireproof</i>	4	3 (\$4.0M)
9	<i>Nights in Rodanthe</i>	5	7 (\$7.4M)
10	<i>An American Carol</i>	-	2 (\$3.7M)