

Box Office Power Rankings: Outta My Way

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 19 November 2008 10:05



Does it make sense to get out of the way of a certain blockbuster? Or should studios try to tap into a market being unserved by that which every human is required to see on its opening weekend?

There are certainly examples of effective counter-programming. *Mamma Mia!* found a \$28-million opening-weekend audience despite

The Dark Knight

's \$158-million debut. It has earned more than \$143 million in the United States.

Yet the numbers suggest that studios were wise to avoid putting any wide releases against *Quantum of Solace*

In the period between big summer releases and big holiday releases — September through mid-November — in 2007 and 2008, the combined domestic box office of the top 10 movies averaged \$84 million, with a median of \$80 million. Outside of this past weekend's \$135-million take, only three of those 20 weekends topped \$100 million (ranging from \$115 million to \$123 million).

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So it's a fair assumption that there's a ceiling for overall box office on a fall weekend, and that an optimistic but marginally reasonable expectation is \$115 million.

To figure whether there's room for a strong opening (say, \$20 million) along with a spectacular one (say, \$50 million), let's figure a 50-percent drop-off for the previous weekend's top eight movies. That gets us \$58 million based on the receipts from November 7 to 9.

That leaves us \$57 million. So if one predicted a \$50-million weekend for James Bond, that would only leave \$7 million on the table for the counter-programming. (*Quantum* actually made \$68 million, but hindquarters are 20/20.)

One could point out that release-date decisions are made far in advance, and one could argue that a 50-percent drop of the \$84-million fall *average* that one might use to make such decisions would give us enough room for a \$50-million opener *and* a \$20-million-plus opener under our imaginary \$115-million ceiling.

I would point out that *Quantum of Solace* barely squeaked by *Role Models* in this week's [Box Office Power Rankings](#)

One might claim that I'm trying to change the subject.

And I would tell one to shut the hell up,

About Box Office Power Rankings

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.

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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: November 14-16, 2008

Box Office Ranks
Rank

Critics' Ranks
Movie

[Last Week](#)

Gross

Per T

[Rotten Tomatoes](#)

[Metacritic](#)

1	<i>Quantum Of Solace</i>	-	10 (\$67.5M)
2	<i>Role Models</i>	1	8 (\$11.2M)

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3	<i>Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa</i>	1	9 (\$35.0M)
4	<i>High School Musical 3: Senior Year</i>	3	7 (\$5.7M)
5	<i>Changeling</i>	4	6 (\$4.3M)
6	<i>Zack and Miri Make a Porno</i>	5	5 (\$3.1M)
7	<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i>	6	3 (\$2.3M)
8	<i>Soul Men</i>	6	4 (\$2.4M)
9	<i>Beverly Hills Chihuahua</i>	-	1 (\$1.6M)

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10

Saw V

9

2 (\$1.8M)