Rotten Tomatoes has a feature called “Average Tomatometer by Year,” and the default screen for Renée Zellweger looks grim. From 2005 to 2009, her score drops for two years (from 80 to 52), recovers a little (to 64), and falls off a cliff (to 19).

This is completely meaningless, of course. If you expand the time frame, the line jumps up and down mercilessly. If you’ve ever heard of the trouble with a “small sample size,” this is prime evidence, with most actors being in one or two movies a year. And Renée is but one person in movies containing (and made by) multitudes.

Still, there’s the sneaking suspicion that Ms. Zellweger is on a downward trajectory. Her latest, the romantic comedy *New in Town*, finished in last place in our Box Office Power Rankings (won by *Slumdog Millionaire*), and new releases only landed in that spot eight other times over the past year. *Entertainment Weekly*’s recent “Recall the Gold” survey wanted to steal her Oscar for 2003’s *Cold Mountain*.

Has the world soured on the ... errrr ... unique charms of Renée Zellweger? She has arguably been asked to “carry” four movies, and the combined Metacritic and Rotten Tomatoes scores for those are 146 (2001’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* [$71.5 million in domestic box office]), 70 (2004’s *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* [$40.2 million]), 123 (2006’s *Miss Potter* [$3.0 million]), and now 48 with *New in Town*

($6.7 million after one weekend). It's hard to call it a trend, but those numbers don't portend good things for her career.

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.

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.net/bopr . Culture Snob is the Web site of Reader Managing Editor Jeff Ignatius.

Box Office Power Rankings: January 30-February 1, 2009

Box Office Ranks		Critics' Ranks			
Rank	Movie	Last Week	Gross	Per T	Rotten Tomatoes

Metacritic

1	***Slumdog Millionaire***	1	5 ($7.6M)
2	***Taken***	-	10 ($24.7M)
3	***Gran Torino***	2	6 ($8.2M)
4	***Hotel for Dogs***	5	7 ($8.6M)
5	***The Uninvited***	-	8 ($10.3M)
5	***My Bloody Valentine 3D***	3	2 ($4.5M)
7	***Paul Blart: Mall Cop***	6	9 ($13.9M)

8	***Underworld: Rise of the Lycans***	3	4 ($7.6M)
9	***Inkheart***	9	1 ($3.7M)
10	***New in Town***	-	3 ($6.7M)