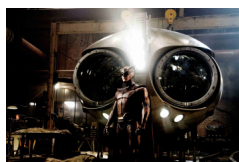


Box Office Power Rankings: Watching the Watchers of "Watchmen"

Written by Jeff Ignatius
Friday, 20 March 2009 12:50

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How do we evaluate *Watchmen*'s box-office performance, given that most of the assessments so far are based on unrealistic expectations that it would do Batman or Spider-Man business?

Fear not: *I* am watching those watching the *Watchmen*. Even though I haven't watched *Watchmen*

Zack Snyder's adaptation of the legendary comic won the [Box Office Power Rankings](#) in its first two weekends, but it's widely considered a commercial disappointment. As [Box Office Mojo](#) put it

:

"*Watchmen* disintegrated 68 percent to \$17.8 million for \$85.8 million in 10 days, trailing all previous superhero movies that debuted in the \$50-million range through the same point. ...

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[A]mong major comic-book movies, only steeper drop-offs."

Hellboy II: The Golden Army and *Hulk* had

That *sounds* damning, but notice the caveats: "superhero movies *that debuted in the \$50-million range*," "major comic-book movies." Notice the quick-read contradiction of "trailing all previous superhero movies" with *other* superhero movies then performing worse.

Box Office Mojo concluded that its box-office performance

"further cemented *Watchmen's* status as a movie with much more limited appeal than other superhero pictures, rooted in its non-mainstream source material and its diffuse storyline and marketing."

But isn't all that self-evident, and hasn't it always been? Anybody who expected *Watchmen* to be a mainstream hit probably also envisioned big things for *Speed Racer*

Watchmen will cross the \$100-million mark domestically in the next few days, and no movie that makes that much money in three weeks is a flop.

Yes, its second-weekend performance was weak, compared to other comic-book movies not attached to a holiday weekend in their first two weeks: *Iron Man*, down 48 percent; *The Dark Knight*, 53 percent; *The Incredible Hulk*, 60 percent; *Spider-Man 3*, 62 percent.

So *Watchmen* dropped 68 percent. Given the vaunted status of the graphic novel and its devoted audience, should anybody be surprised that those who wanted to see it *had to see it on its opening weekend*

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? Given the ambivalence about Snyder's meticulous re-creation, and given the challenges of translation from page to screen, should anybody be surprised that it generated more curiosity than excitement?

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.

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Box Office Power Rankings: March 6-8, 2009

Box Office Ranks Rank	Critics' Ranks Movie	Last Week	Gross	Per Theater
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[Rotten Tomatoes](#)

[Metacritic](#)

1	<i>Watchmen</i>	-	10 (\$55.2M)
2	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	1	7 (\$6.8M)
3	<i>Taken</i>	4	8 (\$7.3M)
4	<i>Coraline</i>	5	4 (\$3.3M)
4	<i>Tyler Perry's Madea Goes to Jail</i>		9 (\$8.5M)
6	<i>He's Just Not That Into You</i>		5 (\$4.0M)
7	<i>Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience</i>		2 (\$2.8M)

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8	<i>Paul Blart: Mall Cop</i>	7	6 (\$4.1M)
9	<i>Confessions of a Shopaholic</i>		3 (\$3.1M)
9	<i>Fired Up!</i>	9	1 (\$2.5M)

Box Office Power Rankings: March 13-15, 2009

Box Office Ranks	Critics' Ranks		
Rank	Movie	Last Week	Gross

[Rotten Tomatoes](#)

[Metacritic](#)

1	<i>Watchmen</i>	1	9 (\$17.8M)
2	<i>Race to Witch Mountain</i>		10 (\$24.4M)

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3	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	2	5 (\$5.0M)
4	<i>Taken</i>	3	7 (\$6.6M)
4	<i>The Last House on the Left</i>		8 (\$14.1M)
6	<i>Coraline</i>	4	2 (\$2.7M)
7	<i>Tyler Perry's Madea Goes to Jail</i>		6 (\$5.1M)
8	<i>He's Just Not That Into You</i>		3 (\$2.9M)
9	<i>Paul Blart: Mall Cop</i>	8	4 (\$3.1M)
10	<i>Miss March</i>	-	1 (\$2.4M)

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