

Lord of the Box Office

By Dr. Ted Baehr and Dr. Tom Snyder

Kingdom Come

As summer 2001 lingered into the fall, awful and mediocre movies like HANNIBAL, THE MUMMY RETURNS, AMERICAN PIE 2, LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER, and DR. DOLITTLE came FAST AND FURIOUS to crowd out more positive movies like SHADOW MAGIC and PEARL HARBOR at the local Cineplex. Despite this, however, movies with positive moral values and Christian-friendly, redemptive content continued to do the best at the box office.

Once again, more than half of the movies reviewed by MOVIEGUIDE® had at least some moral content in them. Also, movies with strong and very strong moral or Christian content, and especially with very strong moral or Christian worldviews, such as THE LORD OF THE RINGS, MONSTERS, INC., SPY KIDS, and THE PRINCESS DIARIES, made significantly more money on average than movies with strong and very strong negative or objectionable content and worldviews.

Furthermore, movies with strong or very strong moral, redemptive and Christian content were much more likely than movies with strong or very strong immoral, non-Christian or anti-Christian content to make it into the Top 25 Grossing Movies at the Box Office.

Best of all, perhaps, MOVIEGUIDE®'s analysis clearly shows, once again, that movies which better reflect the moral, biblical and Christian standards which we apply in our reviews are significantly more successful than those which do not.

America's Sweethearts

Once again, the home video market helped keep Hollywood afloat, earning \$16.8 billion in 2001, more than twice the reported gross earnings from the theatrical box office (\$8.13 billion).

Eighty percent of the Top 10 Home Video Sales and Rentals in 2001 had at least some positive moral and/or biblical content in them. Seventy percent of them had at least some redemptive or Christian content in them. Moreover, four of the top five of these videos are MOVIEGUIDE® Award winners, including 2000's HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS and REMEMBER THE TITANS and 2001's SHREK and PEARL HARBOR!

Artificial Intelligence

Hollywood hype has many people believing the latest figures showing that HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE, a dangerous occult movie seducing many children and some movie critics, is now one of the top 10 money-making movies of all time in North America. This is a phony statistic, however.

If you adjust the box office numbers for inflation, HARRY POTTER appears only at Number 55, as of Feb. 10, 2002. Not only that, but 60 percent of the movies appearing on the Top 10 North American Box Office Movies Adjusted for Inflation were released before the new pagan, humanist ratings system, introduced by the MPAA in 1968. Of the remaining four movies, only one, TITANIC, is rated PG-13, and none are rated R or NC-17. Fi-

nally, the all-time champ at the top, GONE WITH THE WIND, still leads the Number 2 movie, the original STAR WARS, by more than \$100 million on the Top 10 Movies of All-Time Adjusted for Inflation.

Gone with the Wind

The notion that rampant immorality, graphic sex, explicit nudity, filthy language, and very strong or extremely offensive porno violence always sells, or the notion that bashing Christians, their Bible and their faith pays at the box office was completely demolished in 2001 by MOVIEGUIDE®'s newly released 10-year study of statistics.

Our annual analysis of the box office shows that, since 1991, the number of movies with moral, redemptive and Christian-friendly content is growing. Thus, the number of movies with moral content rose from 26 percent in 1991 to 53 percent of the movies in general release in 2001, an increase of nearly 104 percent! Likewise, the number of movies with at least some redemptive or explicit Christian content rose from 10 percent in 1991 to 37 percent in 2001, an increase of 270 percent!

Our annual analysis of the box office also shows that movies with moral, redemptive and Christian content are making significant more money the past few years. Not only that, but they continue to make significantly more money on average than movies with false, immoral and non-Christian worldviews, and significantly more money on average than movies with graphic sex, explicit nudity, filthy language, and porno violence.

More Bang for its Buck

Hollywood took in \$8.13 billion at the box office in 2001 and \$16.8 billion in home video sales and rentals, whereas charitable giving was \$203.45 billion, with giving to churches of \$74 billion. However, children spend 50 times more time with the mass media by the time they are 17-years-old than they do in church if they go to church every Sunday. From this, can we conclude: that Hollywood uses its resources better than churches? And, shouldn't Christians be doing more to redeem the values of the mass media?

Evangelical Christianity's Rapid Growth Rate

But even so, with all the power of the entertainment industry, the good news is, according to author, Jim Rutz, of *THE NEW CHRISTIANITY*, "In the mid-80s, evangelical Christianity experienced a strong upward turn. Prior to 1985, the growth rate was 2% per year, slightly higher than the growth of the world population; today it is around 7.5% per year. If the current growth continues, the entire world would be followers of Jesus Christ in 2041...."

The rules of evidence

In any consideration of the mass media of entertainment, it should be kept in mind the fact that four major medical associations in 2001 concluded that violence in entertainment influenced children to become more aggressive and the Federal Trade Commission found that the entertainment industry was marketing violent movies, music and games to children. Therefore, parents have no excuse for not teaching their children to be media-wise.

In a joint statement, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pedi-

atrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry warned that violence in horror movies, video games, TV, and rap music is contributing to increasing violent behavior among children. “The conclusion of the public health community,” the statement reads, “based on over 30 years of research, is that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behaviors, particularly in children.”

When violence is glorified or at least given a glossy, glitzy treatment, it becomes more palatable to those who would be influenced by it. When more and more see ugliness and violence on the big screen, done well with the best Hollywood talent behind it, it is no wonder that actual violence results.

Training Day

Families and moral Americans are beginning to understand that Hollywood entertainment influences and impacts not only our youth, our families and our future, but also the whole world. Therefore, we need to continue to redeem the values of the mass media so that this persuasive medium can bless and not corrupt more and more people.

The good news is that there are some significant signs of revival in the United States and in Hollywood. Many media executives and talent are re-establishing contact with the broad moral audience, and those men and women can look forward to improved box office performances in their movies. Of course, the Christian Film and Television Commission is ready and available to help them understand the vast moral American audience.