

CINEMA

Movie moguls predict more of the same, only bigger, for 1995

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The movie menu for 1995: more of the same, maybe a little bigger.

Hollywood plans to stick to the same formulas that won its biggest box-office year in 1994: fast action, famous names, far-out comedy. That combination sold \$5.4 billion worth of tickets in U.S. theaters last year, a \$200 million increase over 1993.

"Fortunately or unfortunately, 1995 will bring nothing new," predicted Bill Mechanic, president of 20th Century Fox.

"Bigger being considered better, you will see a lot of films of large scale."

"The proliferating delivery systems for entertainment — cable, cassettes, etc. — are providing moviegoers the opportunity to get stuff after the fact," said Robert Shaye, chairman of New Line Cinema. "The only thing they're missing is the theatrical experience."

"So it looks like the big stuff, the exciting stuff, the fun stuff, the emotion-provoking stuff will be what captures the audience's

imagination and motivates them to go to the movies. People really want to go out. They just want to get their money's worth."

You want big? How about Universal's *Waterworld*, due in July? Starring Kevin Costner, it reportedly has hydroplaned past the \$135 million mark, by far the most expensive movie ever.

Last year, 10 films made at least \$100 million at the box office — eight in the summer and two in December, *The Santa Clause* and *Interview with the Vampire*.

And two of the summer films, *The Lion King* and *Forrest Gump*, are approaching \$300 million.

"The chances for 1995 look better because of more pictures being released in January," said A.D. Murphy, financial expert at *The Hollywood Reporter*. "It used to be that nothing of importance came out until Washington's birthday. But many of the Christmas films were released at Thanksgiving, and most of them are played out."

Blockbuster ticket sales set box office record in '94

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Propelled by blockbusters like *The Lion King* and *Forrest Gump*, the movie industry set a box-office record for the second year in a row with projected North American ticket sales of \$5.42 billion.

The record set in 1993 was \$5.16 billion.

The year's highest-grossing film was *The Lion King*, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. But its take of \$300.4 million was helped by two days of 1995 receipts, since New Year's Day fell on the weekend.

The animated musical narrowly defeated *Forrest Gump*, which reported total sales of \$298.5 million. The Tom Hanks film will be pulled from theaters Jan. 12 and re-released Feb. 17, the first weekend after Oscar nominations are announced.

In the studio race, Walt Disney Co. films captured 19.7 percent of the moviegoing market, knocking Warner Bros. from its three-year reign on top. Disney reported \$1.01 billion in domestic ticket sales.

Warner Bros. held 16.4 percent for second place, followed by Paramount with 14.2 percent, Universal with 12.6 percent and 20th Century Fox with 9.4 percent. The troubled Columbia and TriStar studios each finished a disastrous year with less than 5 percent of the market.

Among the non-major studios, New Line performed the best, with 7 percent of the market.

The year-end figure of \$5.42 billion is based on industry estimates. The Motion Picture Association of America, which compiles the official industry statistics, will announce its 1994 figures in late February or early March.

At the weekend box office, *Dumb and Dumber* continued to play well, and *Disclosure* improved. *Little Women* is connecting with audiences, and *Nell* performed strongly in limited release.

Street Fighter and *Mixed Nuts* faded badly in their second week of release.

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