

'The Grinch' steals top box-office slot

By Judy Lin

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — With no major movies opening in wide release, the weekend box office returns show the top 10 films holding basically the same positions as last week, according to industry estimates Sunday.

"Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas" held on to the top spot for the third consecutive week, bringing in \$27.1 million for an outstanding total gross of \$172 million.

However, studios saw a considerable drop in ticket sales overall.

The top 12 films earned an estimated \$83 million between Friday and Sunday, only half of last weekend's gross of \$167 million, according to Exhibitor Relations Co.

"Unbreakable" held the second spot with \$15 million, about half what it earned last week, while No. 3 "102 Dalmatians" dove to \$8.2 million.

"Rugrats in Paris: The Movie," held No. 4 with \$6.5 million but earned 63 percent less than last week. Sony's "Charlie's Angels" made \$5.2 million in its fifth week.

There was only one change in ranking: The Navy diver drama "Men of Honor" and the Arnold Schwarzenegger cloning thriller "The 6th Day" switched positions, coming in seventh and eighth this week, respectively.

Despite the expected post-Thanksgiving drop-off, Exhibitor Relations president Paul Dergarabedian said weekend revenues increased about 17 percent from last year.

"I expect to see strong revenues in coming weeks. There's good product in the pipeline," Dergarabedian said.

Openings in wide release next week include the kidnapping drama "Proof of Life," starring Meg Ryan and Russell Crowe, the mountain-climber thriller "Vertical Limit" and the fantasy-game turned movie, "Dungeons and Dragons."

Sony will also open in limited release Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," which stars Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh. The martial arts and historical romance set in ancient China has generated a lot of Oscar buzz since making its way around the film festival circuit.

Several other limited-release films drawing Oscar attention continued to hold strong. The feel-good comedy "Billy Elliot" garnered \$1.4 million in 510 theaters, about \$2,745 per screen.

The sibling heartwarmer "You Can Count On Me" earned \$417,000 in 53 theaters, or \$7,868 per screen. The Marquis de Sade costume drama "Quills" made \$209,500 in nine theaters for a remarkable \$23,278 per screen.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. Final figures are to be released Monday.

1. "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas," \$27.1 million.
2. "Unbreakable," \$15 million.
3. "102 Dalmatians," \$8.2 million.
4. "Rugrats in Paris: The Movie," \$6.5 million.
5. "Charlie's Angels," \$5.2 million.
6. "Bounce," \$4.4 million.
7. "Men of Honor," \$4.2 million.
8. "The Sixth Day," \$4 million.
9. "Meet the Parents," \$3.8 million.
10. "Little Nicky," \$2.4 million.



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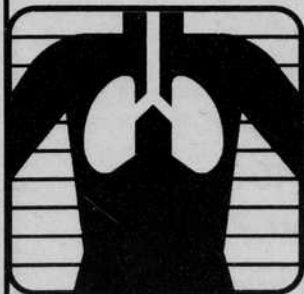
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