



Issue No. 411



Weekend Box Office 12/19-12/21

Courtesy of [Comscore](#)

Rank	Title	Wk	Theatres	Weekend	% Change	Average/ Theatre	Total
1	Avatar: Fire and Ash (20 th)	1	3,800	\$88,000,000	-	\$23,158	\$88,000,000
2	David (Angel)	1	3,118	\$22,017,322	-	\$7,061	\$22,017,322
3	The Housemaid (Lionsgate)	1	3,015	\$19,000,000	-	\$6,302	\$19,000,000
4	The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants (Paramount)	1	3,557	\$16,000,000	-	\$4,498	\$16,000,000
5	Zootopia 2 (Disney)	4	3,540	\$14,500,000	-44	\$4,096	\$282,809,929
6	Five Nights at Freddy's 2 (Universal)	3	3,012	\$7,250,000	-63	\$2,407	\$108,930,000
7	Wicked: For Good (Universal)	5	2,913	\$4,300,000	-50	\$1,476	\$320,507,000
8	Dhurandhar (Moviegoers)	3	400	\$2,473,690	-30	\$6,184	\$12,620,690
9	Marty Supreme (A24)	1	6	\$875,000	-	\$145,833	\$875,000
10	Hamnet (Focus)	4	617	\$850,000	-41	\$1,378	\$8,760,000
			Total	\$175,266,012			

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AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH Leads the Way to a Solid Pre-Christmas Weekend

The final two weeks of 2025 have begun, with a wide variety of holiday openings determining how the year will finish. First among them is Disney and 20th Century's AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH, which took in \$88.0M its debut. Additional support came from three other new releases, Angel Studios' DAVID, Lionsgate's THE HOUSEMAID and Paramount's THE SPONGE BOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUARE PANTS. This same weekend last year generated \$142.3M in ticket sales, led by the opening weekends for Paramount's SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 with \$60.0M and Disney's MUFASA: THE LION KING with \$35.4M. Comparing the two years, weekend 51 this year was 26% higher than the same weekend last year. This makes it all but guaranteed that the last two weeks of 2025 will come in higher than that same period in 2024.

Next week, three more new wide release movies will arrive in theatres, including Sony's ANACONDA, Focus Features' SONG SUNG BLUE and A24's expansion of MARTY SUPREME. We project that the total domestic box office for 2025 will end up at \$8.6B, a slim 1% increase over 2024, but only 3% decline from 2023.

Here is our review of the top five movies of the weekend.

FIRST PLACE

Disney and 20th Century sci-fi sequel AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH opened in first place with weekend sales of \$88.0M. More impressively it has already done a massive \$345.0M in worldwide sales. This is the third entry in James Cameron's AVATAR movie saga, with an opening that was lower than the two earlier films in the series, with AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER earning \$134.2M in its first three days 2022 and the original AVATAR earning \$116.6M in its debut, after adjusting its actual \$77.0M box office from 2009 to account for 16 years of inflation.

Cameron is one of the most commercially successful filmmakers of all time, with his nine movies before this weekend earning \$9B in global box office. This trails only Steven Spielberg's \$10B, noting that Spielberg's number comes from the 35 movies he has made in his career.

Cameron made his first movie in 1982, the horror thriller PIRANHA II: THE SPAWNING, which earned a cringe-worthy Rotten Tomatoes score of 4% from critics and 12% from audiences. From this modest beginning, all his films since then have been winners, with AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH as his tenth feature as director. And after its theatrical run, it will certainly earn the \$1B needed for Cameron to pass Spielberg in the global box office race.

Cameron is responsible for three of the top four highest-grossing films of all time: AVATAR at #1 with \$2.92B, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER at #3 with \$2.32B and TITANIC at #4 with \$2.26B. His films have been nominated for 29 Academy Awards and won nine times. Cameron himself has been nominated six times and won three of those. Each of his three highest-grossing films were nominated for an Academy Awards Best Picture honor, with TITANIC winning in 1998. Cameron has earned a reputation of being a visionary filmmaker, praised by critics, collaborators and industry peers. He exhibits a rare combination of being an engineer, storyteller and showman.

Cameron has created a five-film vision for the AVATAR storyline, with the tale of the AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH chapter taking shape while Cameron's team was working on THE WAY OF WATER. In fact, the way that FIRE AND ASH turned out is said to have caused significant rewrites of the early outlines for the next movie in the series. FIRE AND ASH picks up after the events of THE WAY OF WATER, looking beyond Pandora's oceans to its harsher, volcanic regions where survival is challenged by scarcity, heat and conflict. The leading characters of Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) and Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) strive to protect their family and tribe, facing not only human invaders but also other Na'vi people who are divided internally among themselves.

The film explores how grief, vengeance and a struggle to survive can divide individuals and cultures. Neytiri, carrying a profound personal loss, is pushed into a difficult moral dilemma in which she must confront whether rage can coexist with leadership. Jake faces the conflict of being both a father and a soldier, as protecting his children is in tension with the demands of war. Darker than the two previous installments, FIRE AND ASH explores the idea that Pandora is not guaranteed to be a paradise, but instead that its ultimate fate is shaped by the choices of its people. This film sets the stage for future chapters, showing how cycles of destruction can either consume societies or force them to change.

Critics have weighed in with a somewhat disappointing 68% score on Rotten Tomatoes, with audience expressing more enthusiasm with a 91% rating. Here's what some of the critics are saying. *Bloomberg News* said, "Cameron spins moments of genuine awe, even if he frustratingly repeats familiar beats of THE WAY OF WATER. Still, there's also something comforting about returning to this land." *Deadline* said, "Cameron knows how to do spectacular better than anyone, and this AVATAR builds out its worlds to such a high degree I would dare to say you could put the first two films together and it

still wouldn't add up to the fierce levels and magnitude of the fight in this one." The *Film Verdict* weighed in with "As a sizzle reel for the next wave in CG-animation technology, AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH delivers; as the third chapter of a story that is meant to be moving, or even engaging, this latest chapter once again fails." Finally, The *Toronto Star*, "A certain sameness has set in. The film, an extension of the previous chapter, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER, feels like it's hitting multiple speed bumps on a road it has already driven twice."

Cameron is known for pushing the envelope in his films, usually with little regard to cost, which has resulted in his films being among the most expensive ever made. The current record holder for production budget is Disney and Lucasfilm's STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS, which cost \$447M in 2015. Cameron's previous two AVATAR films cost \$587M combined and earned \$5.2B in global ticket sales, making for a very profitable 9 to 1 ratio of box office to budget.

Therefore, even though Cameron spends a lot to make his films, they have also been among the surest bets in Hollywood. FIRE AND ASH is said to have cost \$400M to make, and will require around \$1B in worldwide box office to begin to make a profit. While in many cases a target of this magnitude would leave its backers on tenterhooks, Disney has every reason to believe that they will make their money back on FIRE AND ASH within the first 2-3 weeks of its release. Cameron's movies have been worldwide phenomena, with the first two AVATARS earning 72% of their total box office outside of North America. Perhaps the only caution about the current and future success of AVATAR has come from Cameron himself, who has linked the potential for any future sequels to the box office success of FIRE AND ASH. Cameron is well-aware of the high cost of his movies, and knows that his films must earn a lot of money in theatres in order for Disney to continue to fund him to make more chapters. AVATAR 4 is most likely assured, with Disney having already announced a target opening date of December 21, 2029. For our comparison films, we have chosen the previous two AVATAR films.

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER and AVATAR

			
	AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH	AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER	AVATAR
Release Date	12/19/2025	12/16/2022	12/18/2009
Domestic Locations	3,800	4,202	3,452
Domestic Opening	\$88.0M	\$134.1M	\$77.0M \$116.6M*
Domestic Total	TBD	\$688.5M	\$785.2M \$1.2B*
Worldwide Total	TBD	\$2.3B	\$2.9B \$4.4B*
Production Budget	\$400M	\$350M	\$237M \$358.8M*
RT Critics	 68%	 76%	 81%
RT Audience	 91%	 92%	 82%

*Adjusted for Inflation

SECOND PLACE

Angel Studios' DAVID, an animated retelling of the life of the biblical King David, finished in second place in its opening weekend with \$22.0M domestically. This means DAVID delivered the highest grossing opening weekend in the studio's history. DAVID is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by Angel Studios. When the film was announced in October of 2021, the studio had already been involved for a year of early development. The first and most important decision was how the film would be animated. Angel had just been founded and had neither the budget nor in-house expertise to carry it off internally. In the fall of 2020, the studio explored international animation partners with the ability to deliver feature film quality on a tight budget. Angel's leadership was looking for animation studios with other features to

their credit, experience with musical storytelling and more flexible and cost-effective teams outside of the traditional structure of Hollywood.

Sunrise Animation Studios, based in Cape Town, South Africa, rose to the top after submitting visual development samples, early character tests, and pipeline demonstrations. Angel selected Sunrise after reviewing their final budget modeling and scheduling plan. Now, four years later, the film has come out just in time for the Christmas Holiday. The picture was directed by the team of Phil Cunningham and Brent Dawes, who also co-wrote and directed *Young David*, a five-part animated miniseries about the early years of the biblical character David. Those episodes were available for free during 2023-2024 on the Angel Studios platform and have served as advanced marketing for DAVID.

To keep budgets low, actors were chosen who had voice-over experience but were relatively unknown by the general public. The production scale was big, involving over 400 crew members globally. To project an epic scale, drones were used to create visual reference for vast spaces and elevation changes. While animation helps make the film more “family” friendly, the filmmakers were adamant about being as accurate as possible in retelling the story. The team consulted biblical scholars and archaeologists in order to avoid winding up with a “generic fantasy Bible world.”

Critics have been somewhat supportive, giving DAVID a 67% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. As is always the case with an Angel Studios film, audiences are thrilled by giving it a near-perfect 98% score. Angel has a knack (and a system) to deliver exactly what their hand-picked audiences are looking for. Here are a few examples of critics’ comments. *The San Jose Mercury News* said, “Phil Cunningham and Brent Dawes — who also wrote the screenplay — venture beyond that well-known slab of the story to give us another timeless moral tale about standing up for what we believe.” *RogerEbert.com* says, “We settle back and enjoy a well-produced, visually impressive, character-driven fable about the man who would be king.” On the other hand, *The Wall Street Journal* offers, “David may be a towering figure of biblical lore, but this telling of a chapter of his story is not merely animated, it’s cartoonish.”

With a \$61M production budget, this is the most expensive film Angel Studios has ever made. In virtually any other case, the entire cost would be born by the studio. However, Angel has a unique approach to financing, asking its Guild members (fans) to chip in their own money to make the film. This produced \$46M to offset the studio’s overall production costs. In fact, Angel claims that DAVID is “the largest audience-funded film in history.”

Rather than the typical ratio of \$2.5 at the box office for every \$1 in production budget to be profitable, the heavy contribution from the Angel Guild members has left an effective budget of only \$15M, which means that the break-even point on this film could come as soon as it earns only \$38M in global sales. After the opening weekend of \$22.0M in the U.S. and Canada and a fertile run ahead over the Christmas holiday period, we think that Angel will have another financial winner on its hands. For a comparison film, we chose THE KING OF KINGS, an animated faith-based film that Angel released in April this year, one week before Easter Sunday.

DAVID vs. KING OF KINGS

	DAVID	THE KING OF KINGS
Release Date	12/19/2025	4/11/2025
Domestic Locations	3,118	3,200
Domestic Opening Weekend	\$22.0M	\$19.4M
Domestic Total	TBD	\$60.3M
Worldwide Total	TBD	\$79.7M
Production Budget	\$61M	\$20M
RT Critics	🍅 67%	🍅 61%
RT Audience	🍿 98%	🔥 97%

THIRD PLACE

Lionsgate's psychological thriller **THE HOUSEMAID** finished in third place in its opening weekend with \$19.0M in the U.S. and Canada. The film is directed by Paul Feig, known for making female-friendly comedies beginning with the legendary **BRIDESMAIDS** from 2011. He followed that up with **THE HEAT** in 2013, **SPY** in 2015 and a female-led reboot of **GHOSTBUSTERS** in 2016. With all the history in comedies, what led to Feig directing a suspense drama like **THE HOUSEMAID**? Feig did have some background with more serious storylines, notably in **A SIMPLE FAVOR** in 2016 which blended psychological tension, erotic intrigue and Hitchcockian misdirection. Feig showed skill in creating a mystery filled with morally ambiguous characters. Blake Lively and Anna Kendrick co-starred as a pair who are initially drawn to each other, but with complications developing over time showing that the relationship is not what it once seemed to be. **THE HOUSEMAID** occupies a similar lane as a glossy, female-driven, twist-heavy domestic suspense. Over his career, Feig has shown women with complex roles who appeal to a primarily female audience.

The movie **THE HOUSEMAID** is based on the novel of the same name by Freida McFadden. The book was an immediate success when it was published in 2022, spending many weeks as a New York Times bestseller and selling over two million copies to date. McFadden followed up in 2023 with *The Housemaid's Secret* and in 2024 with *The Housemaid is Watching*. The three novels together have sold five million copies worldwide.

The movie focuses on the character of Millie Calloway, played by Sydney Sweeney, a young woman with a troubled past who is trying to rebuild her life. Struggling to find honest work after previous setbacks, she accepts a job as a live-in housemaid with the affluent Winchester family, with Nina Winchester played by Amanda Seyfried and Andrew Winchester played by Brandon Sklenar. At first, the lavish mansion and seemingly perfect employers appear to be a dream opportunity for Millie, but soon she realizes that the household is rife with secrets, manipulation and psychological tension. Nina's unpredictable behavior and the family's hidden intrigue pull Millie deeper into a world of seduction, power plays and danger, where nothing is as it appears.

Critics have been mostly positive about the picture, giving it a 75% score on Rotten Tomatoes. The audience is even more entranced with a resounding 93% rating. Here are some examples of the critics' reviews. The *Associated Press* said, "Santa left us a present this holiday season, and it is exactly what we didn't know we needed: A twisty, psychological horror-thriller with nudity that's all wrapped up in an empowerment message." *TheWrap* called it a slice of "glorious, angry, hilarious, nail-biting fun from a director, writer and cast who all know exactly what they're doing, and relish in the fact that they're practically getting away with murder." *USA Today* offers up that "director Paul Feig's movie doesn't hit all the marks of its addictive source material, but the thing is plenty wild enough to be a holiday guilty pleasure."

The movie was made on a controlled production budget of \$35M, meaning that it will need to earn \$88M worldwide to be profitable. Based upon its solid opening of \$19.0M, it is well on its way to that milestone. Moviegoing should be busy for the next three weeks, and should carry this movie to the finish line and beyond. For a comparison title, we look to Feig's **A SIMPLE FAVOR**.

THE HOUSEMAID vs. A SIMPLE FAVOR

	THE HOUSEMAID	A SIMPLE FAVOR
Release Date	12/19/2025	9/14/2018
Domestic Locations	3,015	3,102
Domestic Opening Weekend	\$19.0M	\$16.0M
Domestic Total	TBD	\$53.5M
Worldwide Total	TBD	\$97.6M
Production Budget	\$35M	\$20M
RT Critics	 75%	 84%
RT Audience	 93%	 72%

FOURTH PLACE

Paramount's **THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS** tallied \$16.0M in its opening weekend to finish in fourth place at the box office. While this is the fourth SPONGEBOB movie, **THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SPONGE ON THE RUN** opened at the height of the COVID pandemic on August 14, 2020 and played in only 324 theatres in Canada, without distribution in the U.S. or internationally. Under those very difficult circumstances, **SPONGE ON THE RUN** grossed a mere \$4.8M, so we will not include its fate in our discussion of this weekend's release.

The SPONGEBOB movies are based on characters from the animated TV series that has played on Nickelodeon since 1999. The considerable success of **SpongeBob SquarePants** is measured by it having consistently strong ratings over its 25 years and counting, wide distribution globally and considerable revenue from merchandising and other ancillary sources. **SpongeBob SquarePants** is the longest-running series in Nickelodeon's history, generating billions of dollars annually in merchandise (toys, apparel, games), home entertainment, streaming and theme park attractions. **SpongeBob's** characters are known throughout the world, with its programs translated into 30 languages and airing in 170 countries. It has been a key part of Nickelodeon's financial success and played a role Paramount's valuation during Skydance's pursuit of the studio.

The movie is the directorial debut for Derek Drymon, who was the obvious choice when Paramount decided to stay in-house for the movie, since Drymon has been both a director and supervising director of the TV show for multiple seasons. The main roles in the movie were voiced by the actors from the TV show. In fact, it has been a long-held tradition with the **SpongeBob** movies to offer voice roles to the incumbent TV performers, since the characters' voices are considered part of the brand itself. The only exception with this movie was the casting of Mark Hamill as the Flying Dutchman rather than Brian Doyle Murray who plays the character on the TV show. Murray was consulted in this decision, and all is well as Murray continues to be the character's voice on TV. The plot of the movie follows **SpongeBob** as he sets out on a perilous adventure to prove he's a "big, grown-up sponge." When the legendary Flying Dutchman kidnaps Mr. Krabs and threatens Bikini Bottom, **SpongeBob** leaves the safety of home and journeys into dangerous, mysterious waters. Joined by Patrick and familiar friends, **SpongeBob** faces monsters, tests his courage, and confronts self-doubt. Along the way, he learns that bravery isn't about being fearless, but about caring for others.

Critics are solid on the film with their 88% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, the best of the series. No audience score has been published as of this writing. Here is a sampling of some of the critics' comments. *The Hollywood Reporter* says, "Even with this impressive legacy to uphold, **THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS** easily delivers another rib-tickling, delightfully frantic fourth installment of the series." *The Film Verdict* opines, "Beyond the visual silliness and the knockabout physical comedy, this sweet adaptation of the long-running TV hit sneaks in a lovely message about what it really means to be a man." *The Seattle Times* offers up that "Everybody involved seems to be having a blast

THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS vs. EARLIER SPONGEBOB MOVIES

			
	THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: SPONGE OUT OF WATER	THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE
Release Date	12/19/2025	2/6/2015	11/19/2004
Domestic Locations	3,557	3,641	3,212
Domestic Opening	\$16.0M	\$55.4M	\$32.0M \$54.9M*
Domestic Total	TBD	\$163.0M	\$85.4M \$146.5M*
Worldwide Total	TBD	\$325.2M	\$140.2M \$240.6M*
Production Budget	\$64M	\$74M	\$30M \$51.5M*
RT Critics	 88%	 80%	 68%
RT Audience	 77%	 54%	 79%

*Adjusted for Inflation

making this latest 'SpongeBob' a funny, fast-paced pleasure.” Finally, the ever-serious New York Times weighs in negatively with “No, this is a movie that is bad on its own terms, mainly for its cynical philosophy of children’s entertainment.”

Director Drymon is to be congratulated for pulling off a well-liked film on a budget of \$65M, \$10M less than it cost to make 2015’s SPONGE OUT OF WATER. This film will need to earn \$163M worldwide to be profitable, which seems quite likely since it will be the only new kids movie playing over the Christmas and New Year’s holiday season, it has been well-reviewed and its 2015 predecessor SPONGE OUT OF WATER grossed \$325.2M worldwide. The new movie can earn half as much and still be profitable. For comparison, we have selected the two earlier SPONGEBOB films that saw a wide release.

FIFTH PLACE

Disney’s ZOOTOPIA 2 dropped down from first place last weekend to fifth place, adding another \$14.5M to its domestic total. That brings its 26-day total to \$282.8M domestically and \$1.3B globally. It has already exceeded the total worldwide gross of the original ZOOTOPIA, which brought in \$1.0B in 2016. Together with AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH, Disney will be able to celebrate having two of the best-performing movies of the 2025 holiday season. These films will secure Disney’s place as the market share leader among studios for 2025.

Warner Bros. had established the leading position through the first three quarters of the year, but made the decision to sit out the fourth quarter with no new releases, allowing Disney to pull ahead. We expect Disney to finish the year with approximately 29% market share, and Warner Bros. to come in second with around 21%.

ZOOTOPIA 2 has been the strongest carryover film from Thanksgiving, doing well to maintain a high number of locations for many weeks. In fact, it has only lost 11% of the original number of locations that played the movie on its opening on 11/26. Here is how the ZOOTOPIA 2 compares with the original ZOOTOPIA at this same point in their releases.

ZOOTOPIA 2 vs. ZOOTOPIA after 26 Days in Release

		
	ZOOTOPIA 2	ZOOTOPIA
Release Date	11/26/2025	3/4/2016
Domestic Locations	4,000	3,887
Domestic Opening Weekend	\$96.8M	\$75.1M
Domestic 2nd Weekend	\$43.0M (-57%)	\$51.3M (-32%)
Domestic 3rd Weekend	\$26.3M (-39%)	\$37.2 (-28%)
Domestic 4th Weekend	\$14.5M (-44%)	\$24.0M (-35%)
Domestic Total after 26 Days	\$282.8M	\$249.9M
Domestic Total	TBD	\$341.3M
Worldwide Total	TBD	\$1.0B
Production Budget	\$150M	\$150M
RT Critics	 91%	 98%
RT Audience	 96%	 92%

SPECIAL NOTE

A24's MARTY SUPREME kicked off its theatrical run with a limited six location debut in Los Angeles and New York, where it earned \$875,000, which divides out to a stratospheric \$145,833 per location average. This is the highwater mark for any film opening of 2025. The hyperkinetic sports drama stars Timothee Chalamet as a 1950-s era smooth-talking hustler who reinvents himself as master ping-pong player and self-proclaimed guru of success and masculinity. The movie has a unique blend of world-class table tennis and con man behavior with a touch of organized crime. A24 is expanding to a nationwide distribution of the movie next weekend, and is optimistic that this early success will translate across the country and the world. While this weekend could not have gone any better for the movie, it must also be remembered that the six theatres in New York and Los Angeles that played the movie this weekend are among the best in the country.

Where Are We as of 12/18/2025

After 50 weeks, the 2025 domestic box office stands at 100% compared to the same point in 2024 and 76% compared to 2019.

2025 vs. 2024	2025 vs. 2019
YEAR TO DATE – 50 Weeks – 2025: \$7,907,069,000 2024: \$7,935,376,000 100%	YEAR TO DATE – 50 Weeks – 2025: \$7,907,069,000 2019: \$10,427,963,000 76%

NOTABLE INDUSTRY NEWS & COMMENTARY

Cinema United Releases “Strength of Theatrical Exhibition” 2025 Update Spotlighting Important Movie Theatre Industry Metrics

Cinema United



Cinema United released its 2025 update to its annual “[Strength of Theatrical Exhibition](#)” report, highlighting what it sees as encouraging trends in moviegoing. The report leads with the finding that Gen Z moviegoers have increased the frequency of visiting their local theatres by 25% in the past year. Customers are also increasing their adoption of cinema loyalty programs, with a 15% jump in participating from 2024 to 2025. The number of “habitual moviegoers”

increased by 8%, defined as a person who sees six or more movies per year at the theatre.

The report’s positive outlook was welcomed, amid the [heightened anxiety](#) many in the industry are feeling over the potential sale of Warner Bros., a major supplier of new movies to theatres.

Cinema United’s report uses data from an [annual consumer survey conducted by National Research Group](#) (NRG), entitled “Gen Alpha at the Movies: From Pixels to Popcorn.” Gen Z’s 25% increase in moviegoing was the largest of any age group, pointing to a long-term customer base for theatres. Exhibition’s [increased spending on theatre amenities and infrastructure](#) has also been well-received by younger moviegoers. Overall, 77% of Americans between the ages of 12 and 74 saw at least one movie during the year, representing 200 million individuals. 135 million participated in cinema loyalty plans such as AMC’s A-List or Cinemark’s Movie Club.

Oscars Bolts from ABC to YouTube Starting in 2029

Hollywood Reporter

In a sign of the times, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced this week that it has signed a deal with YouTube to broadcast its annual awards program, beginning in 2029. Until that time, it will continue its run with long-time network partner ABC, finishing in 2028 with its 100th year anniversary program. YouTube has obtained rights to run the program through 2033.

While [rumors had been circulating](#) for some time about YouTube's interest in the Oscars, the show's legacy brand and prestige did strike some as a mismatch with the perception of YouTube as an on-line platform for short-form videos. However, YouTube's role in entertainment is clearly expanding, and hosting traditional "shows" such as The Oscars is a visible indication of its ascendance. It has inked other broadcast marquee deals such as [NFL's "Sunday Ticket"](#) and established YouTube TV as an alternative to traditional cable subscriptions. The Oscars will give YouTube a unique and prestigious property that will attract the attention of older audiences who may not yet think of YouTube as "a place to watch shows."

For the Academy, the move to YouTube is a recognition of changing patterns in viewership over time, with the numbers

off by 50% compared to ten years ago. The impact of the COVID pandemic on movies and moviegoing and an inexorable decline in the number of cable subscribers has exacted its toll. YouTube attracts the largest audience of any platform in the world, with over 2 billion viewers worldwide. By making the awards program available to anyone with internet access, exposure to the Academy's annual celebration of the stars and the movies will rise exponentially.



Not the Last Picture Show: A Small-Town Theater Brings Hope to the Heartland

Salon

The health of theatrical exhibition is most often measured by the box office receipts of multiplexes in major cities. While the majority of ticket sales come out of those venues, local theatres in small towns around the nation can have an outsized impact on those communities, and the experience of their residents. A Main Street theatre with one or two screens often plays the role of an economic and cultural center in their towns.

One great example of this is the [Mayer Theatre](#), a single-screen movie house located in Hebron, North Dakota. The online publisher Salon published a fun and fascinating profile of both the theatre and the town, which has seen a lot of changes over the past decade. The article focuses on the theatre's owner Bonnie Brekke, who saved it from closing when she and her brother Jerry Brekke took it over in 2010. This article is great read, illustrating the unique role of movie theatres such as The Mayer in their communities, and

the challenges they face in the evolving landscape of movies and moviegoing.



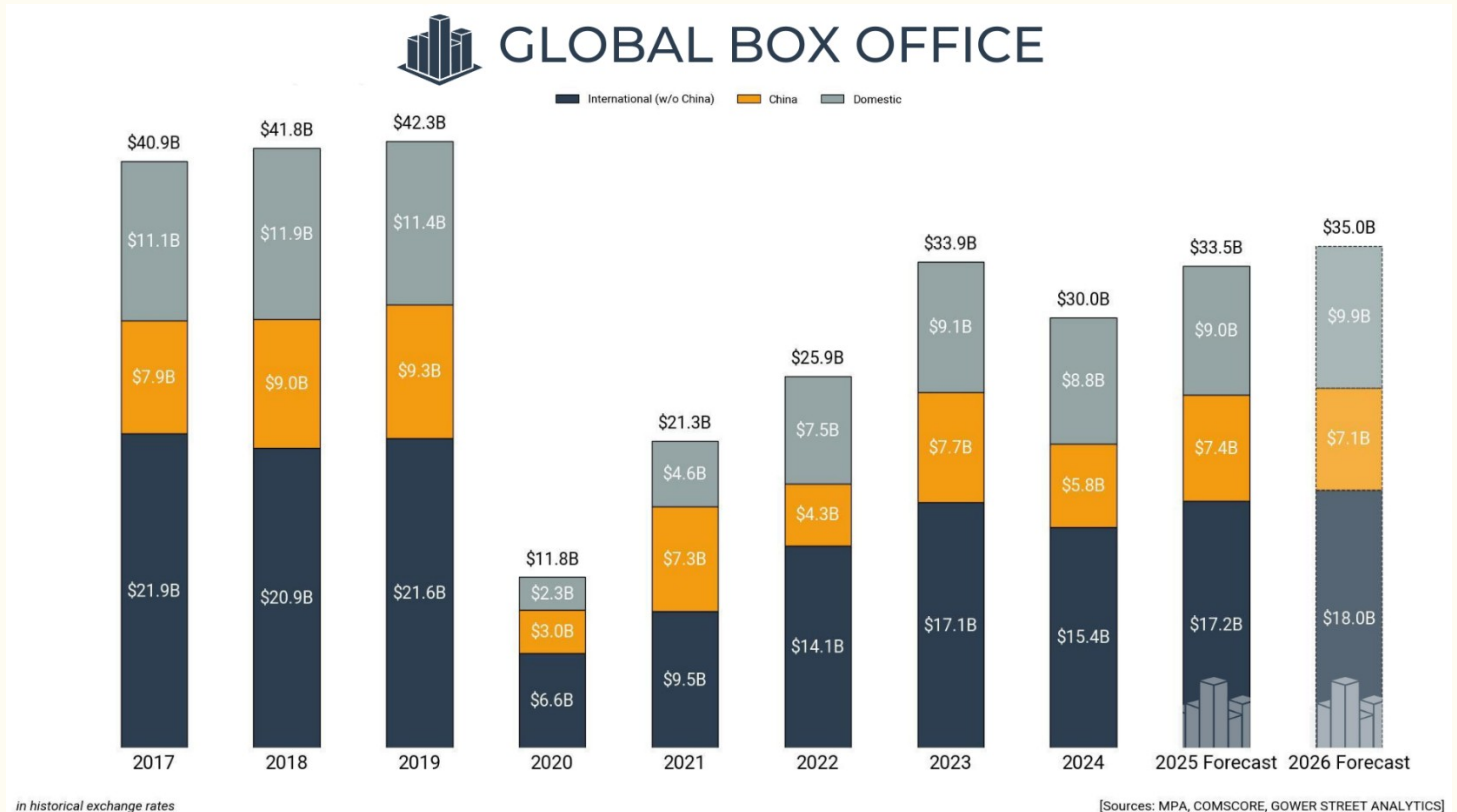
Gower Street Announces Early 2026 Global Box Office Estimate

Gower Street Analytics estimates 2026 Global box office will reach \$35 billion.

This would mark a second consecutive year of Global box office growth, +5% against current estimates for 2025.

“We predict 2026 will be the highest grossing global year since 2019 (\$42.3bn), topping the current high of 2023 (\$33.9bn)” said Gower Street’s Chief Analyst Thomas Beranek, who led the work on the 2026 projection. “Especially in the markets driven by Hollywood product, we expect the most significant growth.”

At current exchange rates, the 2026 estimate would remain -12% behind the average of the last three pre-pandemic years (2017-2019).



Gower Street announces its forward projection for the coming year each December. The projection utilizes data from Gower Street’s flagship FORECAST service based on the current release calendar alongside additional analyst assessment.

“Our forecasting accuracy remains strong,” said Gower Street CEO Dimitrios Mitsinikos of the method used. “For 2024, our early forecast landed within 5% of the actual global year-end result, a year ahead of time. For 2025, we’re tracking toward a final global total within 2% of our original \$33 billion forecast from 12 months ago.”

For 2026, the Domestic (North American) market is projected to finish 11% up on 2025 (est.) at approximately \$9.9 billion. This is -14% against the 2017-2019 average.

The International market (excluding China) is predicted to finish 5% ahead of 2025 (est.) at approximately \$18.0 billion. This is -11% against the 2017-2019 average at current exchange rates. Within this, the three key regions are estimated as follows:

- EMEA \$10.05bn (+7% vs 2025 est.; -9% vs 2017-2019 ave)
- Asia Pacific (exc. China) \$5.3bn (0% vs 2025 est.; -15% vs 2017-2019 ave)
- Latin America \$2.65bn (+9% vs 2025 est.; -5% vs 2017-2019 ave)

“There is an incredibly strong franchise-led release calendar for 2026 with new instalments in massively popular film series including AVENGERS, SPIDER-MAN, TOY STORY, DUNE, STAR WARS, SUPER MARIO BROS, MINIONS,

JUMANJI, SCREAM, THE FOCKERS, and HUNGER GAMES,” said Rob Mitchell, Gower Street’s Director of Theatrical Insights. “But there are also many potentially huge hits among non-sequels, including musical biopic MICHAEL; the live action version of MOANA; and new titles from legendary blockbuster directors Christopher Nolan (THE ODYSSEY) and Steven Spielberg (DISCLOSURE DAY), among many others. Audiences will be spoilt for choice.”

Following a year of ups and downs, which generated both the biggest local title of all-time (NE ZHA 2) and the #2 import title ever (ZOOTOPIA 2), but which also suffered long periods of weaker performance, China is conservatively estimated at \$7.1 billion (-4% vs 2025 est.). However, due to the limited release calendar at this stage, it remains the hardest market to predict.

It should be noted that this is a very early prediction and Gower Street would expect to see further changes to the release calendar result in some fluctuation. There are also a number of Untitled studio releases currently dated, which, as more becomes known about these titles, could impact projections. The projection can also not account for unexpected global events.

Please note: Figures shown in the stacked bar graph show US\$ figures at historical exchange rates for years prior to 2025 and at current exchange rates for Forecast years (2025-2026). Year-to-year comparisons within the text recalculate previous years using current exchange rates for comparison.

STUDIO RELEASE CALENDAR (12/26-1/22)

Click on any title to view more information.

12/26/25 (Week 52) All titles open 12/25 Prior Year Results: \$199,296,201				1/1 New Year's Day			
Anaconda	Sony	PG-13 1h 40m Action Adventure	12/25 Wide (3,000) \$25M-\$30M Open \$70M-\$80M Total				
Marty Supreme Screened very well, great performance by Timothee Chalamet. Specialty film audience likely.	A24	R 2h 30m Comedy, Drama	12/25 Wide (2,500) \$15M-\$20M Open \$65M-\$75M Total				
Song Sung Blue Enjoyable performances from Kate Hudson and Hugh Jackman.	Focus Features	PG-13 2h 13m Drama, Music	12/25 Wide (2,000) \$10M-\$15M Open \$30M-\$40M Total				
The Plague	IFC Films	R 1h 35m Horror, Drama	12/24 Limited				
The Testament of Ann Lee	Searchlight	R 2h 17m Biography, History	12/25 Limited				
The Choral	Sony Pictures Classics	R 1h 48m Drama, History	12/25 NY/LA				
1/2/26 (Week 1) Prior Year Results: \$104,352,867							
We Bury the Dead	Vertical	R 1h 35m Horror, Mystery, Thriller	Wide (1,500) \$1M-\$2M Open \$3M-\$5M Total				
The Plague	IFC Films	R 1h 35m Horror, Drama	Moderate				
Stranger Things 5: Finale	Netflix	2h 5m Drama, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	Limited				
KIDZ BOP LIVE: The Concert Movie	Fathom Entertainment	Concert Family	1/2-5 Event				
1/9/26 (Week 2) Prior Year Results: \$85,954,804							

Greenland: Migration GREENLAND streamed 1/26/21. Due to COVID, it did not release in theatres.	Lionsgate	PG-13 Action, Thriller	Wide (2,500) \$15M-\$20M Open \$30M-\$40M Total
Primate	Paramount	1h 29m Horror	Wide (3,000) \$10M-\$15M Open \$25M-\$30M Total
I Was a Stranger	Angel	PG-13 1h 43m Drama	Wide (1,500) \$6M-\$8M Open \$10M-\$15M Total
Is This Thing On?	Searchlight	R 2h 4m Comedy, Drama	Wide Exp.
MET Opera: I Puritani	Fathom Entertainment	NR 3h 47m Opera, Special Events	1/10 Event
Dead Man's Wire	Row K	R 1h 45m Crime, Drama	Limited
Labyrinth 40th Anniversary	Fathom Entertainment	PG 1h 41m Fantasy, Musical	1/8-11 Limited
Gundam Premiere Night	Fathom Entertainment	Event	1/12 Limited
The Metropolitan Opera: I Puritani	Fathom Entertainment	Musical Event	1/10 & 1/14 Event

1/16/26 (Week 3)

Prior Year Results: \$80,308,992

1/19 MLK Day

28 Years Later: The Bone Temple	Sony	1h 49m Horror	Wide \$20M-\$30M Open \$45M-\$60M Total
Dead Man's Wire	Row K	R 1h 45m Crime Drama	Wide Exp.
Hamnet	Focus Features	PG-13 2h 5m Biography, Drama, History	Wide Exp. (2,000)
Madagascar 20th Anniversary	Universal	PG 1h 26m Adventure, Animation, Family	Limited
Leave	Footage Films	Drama, Horror	Limited
Charlie the Wonderdog	Viva Pictures	1h 35m Animation, Family	Moderate
Night Patrol	IFC Films	R 1h 44m Horror, Thriller	Moderate
The Choral	Sony Pictures Classics	R 1h 53m Drama, History, Romance	Moderate (500+)
Signing Tony Raymond	Iconic	NR (Treat as PG) 1h 45m Comedy	Limited
All You Need is Kill	GKIDS	R 1h 22m Animation	Limited
A Private Life	Sony Pictures Classics	R 1h 47m Crime, Drama, Mystery	NY/LA
Anaganaga Oka Raju	CGX	NR 2h 30m Comedy, Romance	1/14 Limited
The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings	Fathom Entertainment	Action, Fantasy	1/17 Event
The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	Fathom Entertainment	Action, Fantasy	1/18 Event
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Fathom Entertainment	Action, Fantasy	1/17 Event

RELEASE CALENDAR

RELEASE CHANGES

NOTABLE TRAILERS



Melania (Amazon MGM)
1/30 Limited



Solo Mio (Angel Studios)
2/6 Wide



The Super Mario Galaxy Movie (Universal)
4/3 Wide



The Devil Wears Prada 2 (20th Century)
5/1 Wide

[SEE MORE](#)

FEATURED PODCAST

DON'T KILL THE MESSENGER

Jon M. Chu (Director, Producer, & Screenwriter) on Wicked, Casting Elphaba and Glinda, and Defending Cinema

Season 2025 | Episode 81 | Dec 7, 2025

In this episode of Don't Kill the Messenger, host Kevin Goetz welcomes Jon M. Chu on the opening day of Wicked: For Good, a film that generated exciting audience reactions during test screenings. From his family's Chinese restaurant in Silicon Valley to directing one of the most anticipated musicals in Hollywood history, Jon's journey reveals how generosity, gratitude, and respect for storytelling shape extraordinary movies.

[LISTEN NOW](#)

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH



VERDICT: James Cameron once again dazzles the eye without engaging the brain or the heart.

Alonso Duralde, December 16, 2025

[FULL REVIEW](#)

THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS



VERDICT: Beyond the visual silliness and the knockabout physical comedy, this sweet adaptation of the long-running TV hit sneaks in a lovely message about what it really means to be a man.

Alonso Duralde, December 19, 2025

[FULL REVIEW](#)

THE HOUSEMAID



VERDICT: Soapy, glossy trash delivered with wit, style, and indelible performances makes for a satisfyingly old-fashioned thriller with bite.

Alonso Duralde, December 16, 2025

[FULL REVIEW](#)

ALONSO DURALDE'S TOP 10 FILMS OF 2025



VERDICT: 2025 was a calamitous year in many ways, but there were always worthwhile movies to see.

Alonso Duralde, December 18, 2025

[FULL REVIEW](#)