

# Weekend Report: 'Avatar' Unfazed in Seventh Outing

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Not to sound like a broken record for a record-breaker, but Avatar maintained its blistering pace over the weekend. The box office colossus raked in \$31.3 million, again posting the strongest hold for a nationwide release: down only ten percent. That ranks as the

Avatar

highest-grossing seventh weekend ever, surpassing Titanic's \$25.9 million (though Titanic was much higher in estimated attendance), and that pushed the total up to \$595.8 million in 45 days. At its current pace, Avatar could exceed Titanic's \$600.8 million as early as Tuesday to become the highest-grossing movie of all time (though not highest in attendance).

Avatar is already the top grosser overseas and worldwide, but it widened its lead with another mammoth week and crossed the \$2 billion worldwide (domestic plus foreign) threshold in the process. Its foreign weekend came to \$95.3 million, down a mere 12 percent, which lifted its total to \$1.447 billion. Italy was its top market of the weekend with \$11 million (\$55.8 million total second only to Titanic), followed by China at \$10.9 million (\$127.6 million total), and the movie plowed past the \$100 million milestone in Germany, the United Kingdom and Russia.

Returning to domestic, new releases *Edge of Darkness* and *When in Rome* were fairly tepid. *Edge* claimed \$17.2 million on approximately 3,600 screens at 3,066 sites, which was within the average range for its genre: its attendance was about the same as *Righteous Kill*, *The Brave One* and *The Punisher* but a far cry from *Taken*, *Gran Torino* and *Man on Fire* among others. The revenge thriller marked the return to acting for Mel Gibson, who was a top box office draw up until his last movie *Signs* in 2002. In the time since, Mr. Gibson directed two violent pictures, *The Passion of the Christ* and *Apocalypto*, and received a lot of press for a drunken-driving/anti-Jewish-spewing incident in 2006. He played in his wheelhouse with *Edge*, which had similar subject matter as *Ransom*, *Payback* and others and put his tortured persona at the forefront, something that's always been there but has been magnified in the wake of *The Passion*.

*Edge of Darkness*' poster design was cut from the same cloth as *Gran Torino*, *Taken* and others, featuring a glaring Mel Gibson in black-and-white, and the movie's

late January release date was set after *Taken*'s success on the same weekend last year. Aside from Mr. Gibson's presence, *Edge* came off as a common and grim revenge picture a la *Death Wish* among others. *Taken* was about saving a daughter, but, in *Edge of Darkness*, the daughter dies, and that lack of hope may be part of the difference in the grosses (though *Taken*'s marketing was much stronger).

According to distributor Warner Bros.' exit polling, 53 percent of the audience was male and 90 percent was over 21 years old, while 78 percent came out to see for Mr. Gibson.



Avatar: Zoe Saldana is Neytiri, a Na'vi environmentalist, and a member of Pandora's royal clan of Na'vi. Photo credit: 100 To

Zoe Saldana is Neytiri

When in Rome plucked \$12.4 million from around 2,600 screens at 2,456 sites, which, like Edge, was average among comparable titles but it was more than Ireland-set Leap Year. The romantic comedy was aggressively marketed but in a shotgun manner: ads failed to convey the premise of the movie in any coherent way and lacked any taste of Rome, instead resorting to generic cutesiness that included lead actors Kristen Bell and Josh Duhamel chatting directly to the camera. The poster was likely as off-putting as it was non-descript: it featured an unflattering image of Bell with gaping choppers and fingers awkwardly touching her mouth against an eye-jarringly bright yellow background. Distributor Walt Disney Pictures' reported an audience breakdown of 69 percent female, 55 percent over 25 and 61 percent couples.

Among holdovers, The Tooth Fairy showed some family movie stamina in its second weekend with its 29 percent dip, fluttering to \$10 million for a \$26.1 million total in ten days. Its fellow second-weekenders, Legion (2010) and Extraordinary Measures, bled profusely. Legion had a steeper-than-average fall for a non-sequel horror movie, down 59 percent to \$7.2 million for a \$29 million tally in ten days. Extraordinary fared even worse for an adult drama, off 56 percent to \$2.6 million for a \$10.4 million total in ten days.

The Book of Eli had a standard-issue drop, down 43 percent to \$8.9 million for a \$74.5 million tally in 17 days, as did The Lovely Bones, off 44 percent to \$4.7 million for a \$38 million total. Creeping closer to \$200 million with its \$4.5 million weekend, Sherlock Holmes held well again as did Up in the Air and The Blind Side among others. Meanwhile, The Princess and the Frog finally eked past the \$100 million mark, though it doesn't have much further to go.

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