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Family-Friendly Films Top Box Office in 2010

By Hollie McKay

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With the exception of Christopher Nolan's psychological thriller "Inception," the top-grossing films of 2010 were all aimed squarely at families.

According to Box Office Mojo, this year's highest-grossing film was Disney-Pixar's "Toy Story 3" which earned \$1.06 billion internationally, followed by Tim Burton's twist on "Alice in Wonderland," "Inception," and the first part of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows."

Our favorite ogres took the number five spot with the fourth installment of the "Shrek" franchise, followed by the tween sensation "The Twilight Saga: Eclipse," "Iron Man 2," the Steve Carell-voiced "Despicable Me," "Clash of the Titans," and the fantastical "How to Train Your Dragon."

But even "Inception" was rated PG-13, meaning not a single R-rated film made the top box office list in 2010.

In 2009, the list of the top 10 grossing films included several adult-friendly flicks, including "The Hangover," "Angels & Demons," and "2012." And a decade ago, that trend held up, with films like "What Lies Beneath," "Gladiator," and "The Perfect Storm" in the top slots.

"We are seeing a generation of parents of small and school age children that is unusually child centered and concerned about quality time with their kids; fathers especially are unusually child-orientated compared to earlier generations. So these parents are spending a lot more time with their kids and movies are one way to do this," Hollywood pop culture expert Elayne Rapping told Pop Tarts. "We are also living at a time of great social unrest and uncertainty, so it is not surprising that audiences in general are looking to more light-hearted, upbeat family-orientated entertainment rather than the darker, more serious films."

And while family flicks have enjoyed success in the past, their popularity seems to have hit a high point in 2010.

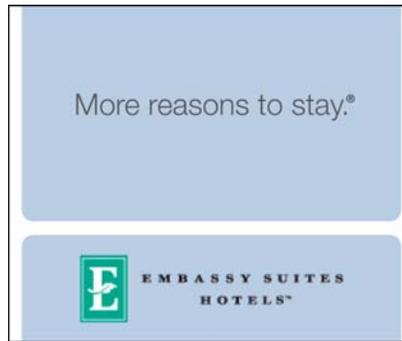
"Family-friendly films have proven to be a very safe – and lucrative – bet over the past few years for the studios as they look to maximize their profits from increasingly high investments in productions," Scott Huver, Los Angeles Editor of PopcornBiz blog, told Pop Tarts. "These films typically come with several advantages: many of them are adaptations of or sequels to pre-existing properties, parents feel comfortable allowing their children to see films that have been marketed with family friendliness."

Studios will trot out several family-friendly blockbuster hopefuls in 2011, including "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides," Jason Segal's revival of "The Muppets," "Thor," "Captain America," and the sequel to the successful animation "Cars 2."

"As studios grow even more cautious about where their production dollars are going in the months and years ahead, blockbuster-family films will continue to remain priorities on their production slates – and mega-income generators that cushion the blows when riskier ventures flop," Huver said. "American audiences love family-friendly films and buy tickets to them, especially when the films are extremely satisfying and inventive on a story or character level."

"Along with the enjoyment that comes with well-made films, Americans also seem to treasure a built-in nostalgia about their own youths," Huver said. "Family films that evoke feelings similar to the ones they felt as children often resonate strongly with seemingly hipper audience members, especially when driven by dazzling new cinematic techniques and effective storylines."

Deidre Behar contributed to this report



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