

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

If it's Bank, it's Good

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According to E-Online (screenshot above), “*Tangled* overcame *Deathly Hallows*.” What more is there to know?

Whether you are a small theatre owner or a highly paid film studio executive, you are facing calculations of the marketplace and creative work, and these forces are often at odds. As a film producer, I can work on a movie for years, deploying millions of dollars and investing thousands of hours in time. I can fall in love with the film, the director, the actors’ work and the story.

Then one day, a Friday, the film opens to the general public. At that instant, the criteria for success changes: no longer is quality measured in terms of creativity; it is measured in terms of dollars, per-screen averages and competition in the multiplex marketplace. Forever after, that film will be judged as a success or failure based on its profit, not its art.

But who’s made this shift in judgment? Not the general public, who just came to see and enjoy a movie. Instead, this shift was made and publicized by the mass media’s sensibility for naming “Top Tens” and “Winners” in numerical terms, which tells us nothing, of course, about any values other than those of the marketplace.

The problem’s immediate and it also affects our future. The movies, books, music and television shows that become cultural influences – and will determine what projects get “green-lit” next – are those that make a lot of money. In our current climate, if *Avatar* hadn’t made a ton of cash it would not have been able to shape the next generation of filmmaking. We’ve allowed dollars to become our aesthetic gatekeepers.

When art becomes commodity, with success is measured only in dollars, the system fails, as it does in any other industry that has only a financial bottom line.

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