



Issue No. 252



Weekend Box Office Results... 12/23 – 12/25

Courtesy of [Comscore](https://www.comscore.com)

Rank	Title	Week	Theatres	Wknd \$	% Change	\$ Avg/ Theatre	Total \$
1	Avatar: The Way of Water (20 th Century)	2	4,202	56,000,000	-58	13,327	253,681,686
2	Puss in Boots: The Last Wish (Universal)	1	4,099	11,350,000	-	2,769	18,253,000
3	Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Sony)	1	3,625	5,300,000	-	1,462	5,300,000
4	Babylon (Paramount)	1	3,343	3,500,000	-	1,047	3,500,000
5	Violent Night (Universal)	4	2,562	3,140,000	-38	1,226	41,608,460
6	Black Panther: Wakanda Forever (Disney)	7	2,250	3,022,000	-43	1,343	425,677,401
7	The Whale (A24)	3	603	924,329	539	1,533	2,066,273
8	The Menu (Searchlight)	6	840	617,000	-62	735	33,796,843
9	The Fabelmans (Universal)	7	1,122	550,000	-26	490	9,724,456
10	Strange World (Disney)	5	1,390	410,000	-81	295	35,599,242

Weekend Review for 12/23 – 12/25

Any review of this weekend's box office must take into account that Christmas Eve fell on the worst possible day of the week, Saturday, the top moviegoing day of the week. Christmas Eve usually holds down grosses by 25%-30%, as families begin to gather in the evening and many theatres close early. What's more, large portions of the U.S. were under a winter storm advisory for much of the weekend. We will try to provide a fair and balanced assessment of the results, while factoring in these unusual factors.

As expected, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER in its second weekend led all movies with \$56M for the three days, which included Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. This represents a sizeable drop of 58% from last week's successful opening of James Cameron's Sci-Fi epic.

Grosses for the original AVATAR actually went up 7% in its second weekend when it opened in 2009. The second weekend for last year's box office hero SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME began on Christmas Eve, which fell on a Friday, and the impact of bad weather happened to be much more limited. Even so, SPIDEY dropped 67% in week two, so by comparison AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER held up well while struggling with much more adverse circumstances.

Normally, a drop of 58% indicates declining interest and portends slow ticket sales from that point forward, but we're tempted to give AVATAR 2 a pass this year and expect it to do well for many weeks. Last year, SPIDEY rebounded nicely from its drop on Christmas weekend, and went on to wow audiences and delight exhibitors to the tune of \$814M in the U.S. and Canadian market. With its first week gross of \$198M, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER outpaced the 2009 original by 145%, though it registered only 51% of SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME's opening week.

Universal and Dreamwork's animated sequel PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH opened in second place with \$11.4M for the weekend and \$18.3M for the five days starting Wednesday. The original PUSS IN BOOTS also opened on a Wednesday, 10/27/2011, and generated \$34M for its opening weekend and \$42M for the five days beginning on Wednesday. The original PUSS went on to gross \$154M for its total run in theatres. This year's PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH appears have started very slowly by comparison, even after factoring in impact of the Saturday holiday and bad weather. That being said,

the spinoff from the SHREK lineage is far from tapped out, especially since the holiday week ahead is the best weekday moviegoing frame of the year. We'll watch closely to see if PUSS rebounds.

Sony's WHITNEY HOUSTON: I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY came in third place with a debut of \$5.3M. While reviewers lined up against the film by giving it a 47% critics' score on Rotten Tomatoes, moviegoers sang along merrily with a 97% audience score. Even after considering the weekend's limiting factors, the Whitney Houston biopic is off to slow start and could struggle to sell enough tickets to earn back its \$45M production budget. On the bright side, the recent slate of high-profile musical biopics including BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (Freddie Mercury), ROCKETMAN (Elton John) and ELVIS have all started off slowly but gone on to deliver solid results. Here's hoping that Whitney rises to the occasion as well.

Fourth place went to Paramount's BABYLON with \$3.5M in its opening weekend. Damien Chazelle's historical drama romanticizes the debauchery of Hollywood in its early days and features an A-list cast led by Margot Robbie and Brad Pitt. Chazelle struck a chord in 2016 with LA LA LAND, but BABYLON turn out to be too provocative for general audiences. The MPA gave it an R rating for "strong and crude sexual content, graphic nudity, bloody violence, drug use, and pervasive language". Yikes! It remains to be seen if the tone will resonate with holiday audiences. A lackluster opening seems to indicate that it will struggle from this point forward and wind up as a box office bust, after its backers invested \$80M in its production. Critics are sour about the film with a 55% fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes, while audiences are only slightly better with their 75% rating. BABYLON might have had a stronger start if it had opened earlier in the year, when it could have taken advantage of a window during which there was no other high-end competition.

VIOLENT NIGHT finished in fifth place with \$3.14M followed closely by BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER which grossed \$3.02M. The box office for all pictures this weekend was a meager \$86M compared to last year's \$141M during the same weekend. The shortfall cannot be explained entirely by the external factors outlined above. These titles will need to hold particularly well, or exhibitors will suffer another disappointing holiday week, as occurred one month ago at Thanksgiving.

Where Are We as of 12/22

Last week, AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER faced off against last year's big opener SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME. AVATAR 2 came up short by comparison, grossing only 51% of SPIDEY's opening week. This deficit had a dramatic impact on the comparison between the first 11 weeks of Q4 2022 to the same weeks in 2021. This year's 11-week stretch was only 88% of last year's, which represents a decline of 14% from where the Q4 comparison stood last week after 10 weeks. The 2022 box office remains at 67% compared with the same fifty-week period in 2019.

2022 VS. 2019	2022 VS. 2021
YEAR TO DATE – 50 WEEKS – 2022: \$7,011,860,000 2019: \$10,443,266,000 67%	4th QUARTER – 11 WEEKS – 2022: \$1,411,175,000 2021: \$1,603,742,000 88%

FILM FLASHBACK

THUNDERBALL Premieres in N.Y.C. 12/21/1965

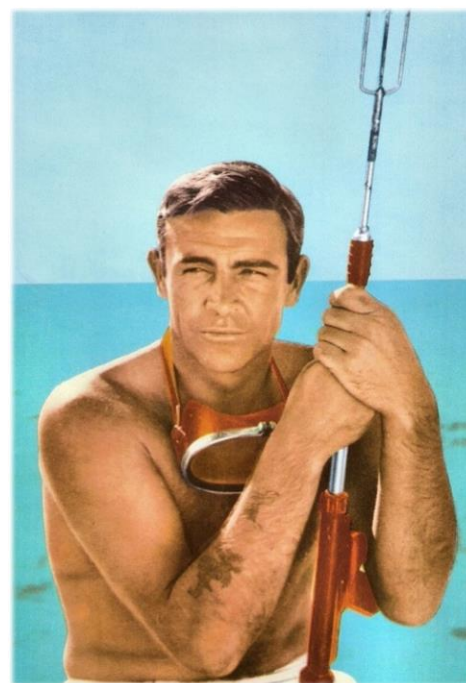
THUNDERBALL, the fourth James Bond film, premiered Dec. 21, 1965 in New York City, but would have been the franchise's first episode had things gone differently six years earlier.

Novelist Ian Fleming, who created 007, producer Kevin McClory and screenwriter Jack Whittingham had partnered in 1959 to develop an original story & screenplay they called JAMES BOND, SECRET AGENT, which would have been Bond's screen debut. McClory reportedly had Richard Burton in mind for that role. What happened next isn't entirely clear, but Fleming reportedly changed his mind about going forward with McClory when another of his films under-performed.

This wasn't the first time Fleming had scrapped plans for a Bond spin-off. When a TV series and a newspaper comic strip went into his deep freeze, Fleming re-used some storyline elements in his novels. He did the same with SECRET AGENT while writing THUNDERBALL, but here it wasn't clear if he had the right to do that.

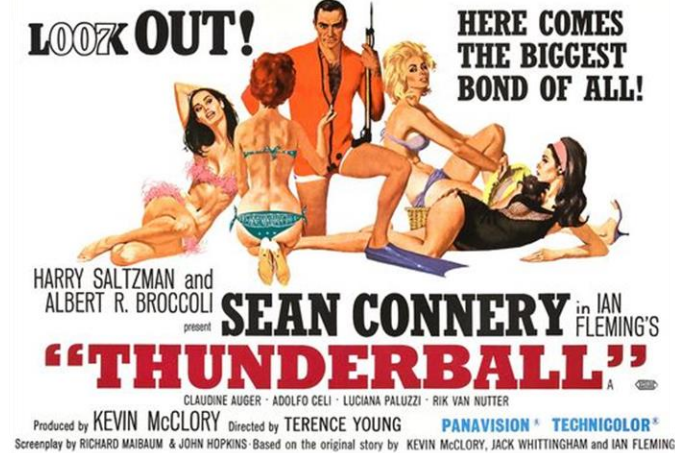
McClory, for one, insisted Fleming wasn't entitled to use that story material. After Harry Saltzman acquired from Fleming the movie rights to his Bond novels and then partnered with Albert R. Broccoli to produce them with distribution through United Artists, McClory took them to court. That's why DR. NO rather than THUNDERBALL was the first Bond movie.

McClory's court case began Nov. 19, 1963. Ten days later Fleming settled out of court, giving McClory the movie rights to THUNDERBALL plus £50,000 in damages. Although the movie THUNDERBALL was adapted from Fleming's novel, the settlement's specified writing credits were: "Screenplay by RICHARD MAIBAUM & JOHN HOPKINS - Based on the original story by KEVIN McCLORY, JACK WHITTINGHAM and IAN FLEMING."



Sean Connery stars as James Bond in THUNDERBALL (1965), the fourth movie featuring [Ian Fleming's spy superhero](#).

THUNDERBALL, which starred Sean Connery, was directed by Terence Young, director of DR. NO (1962) & FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE (1963). Guy Hamilton, who directed GOLDFINGER (1964), was originally asked to do THUNDERBALL, but felt creatively drained and passed. Young stepped in and THUNDERBALL became his third and final Bond film.



Gadgets, girls, villains and one-liners are staples of the James Bond series. [Click to watch](#) 007 skewer an assailant after he emerges from behind a palm tree on Bahamas beach. "I think he got the point." 😊

It's the only Bond movie where Saltzman & Broccoli are credited as executive producers rather than producers. It's also the only Bond episode from their Eon Productions where McClory is credited as producer. McClory did, however, produce a second Bond movie not associated with Eon -- Warner Bros.' NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN (1983), which was Connery's final on-screen performance as 007. NEVER, of course, was a remake of THUNDERBALL, which McClory's settlement 20 years earlier allowed him to do.

It was in THUNDERBALL that Connery performed the now [iconic Bond opening gun barrel sequence](#) for the first time. Because this was the first Bond filmed in the then new Panavision wide screen process, it was decided to show Bond firing his gun rather than just use an actor in shadows as had been done. After THUNDERBALL, Bond would always do the gun barrel shooting.

Notable Industry News & Commentary

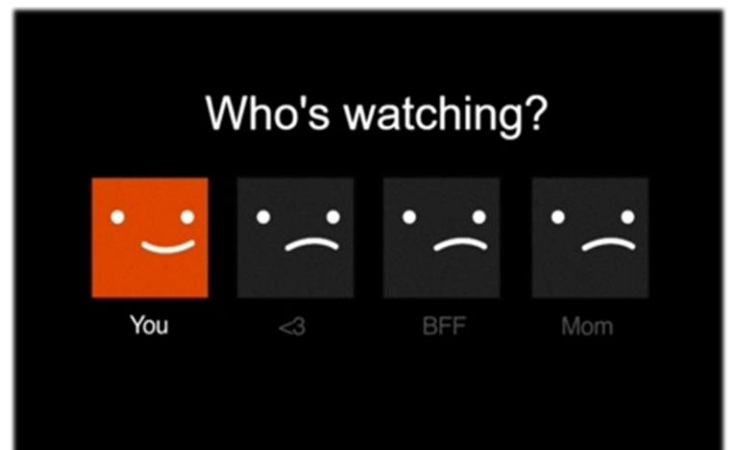
[The End of Netflix Password Sharing Is Nigh](#) (Wall Street Journal)

2022 has been a year of reckoning for Netflix. At the beginning of the year, it experienced two consecutive quarters of decline in its U.S. subscriber count, for the first time in the company's 25-year history. By mid-year, the company stock price had plunged more than 70% from the level where it began the year, though it has rebounded to reach one-half its starting point for 2022. Netflix's problems have been compounded by increasing competition from a host of deep-pocketed streaming services such as Disney+, HBO Max, Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, and many others in the next tier.

In response, Netflix has made several key updates to its business model, including the introduction of a lower-cost, advertising supported tier of service to appeal to budget conscious consumers and an upcoming crackdown on password sharing among its subscribers.

Netflix's ad-supported service has had only limited traction in the 6 weeks since it debuted in early November, with tracking expert Antenna reporting that only 9% of new Netflix signups over that period chose the ad-supported option. Of those, 57% were net-new subscribers to Netflix whereas 43% traded down from their higher-priced traditional subscription.

This represents a significantly higher percentage of users moving to the lower-cost, ad-supported option than other streaming services such as HBO Max experienced when they introduced their own ad-supported service.



Netflix's other major initiative is its long-anticipated crackdown on password sharing, a very widespread practice among its users. More than *100 million* viewers are estimated to be using someone else's password to log in to Netflix, resulting in billions of lost revenues to the company. Netflix's leaders have been aware of the password sharing phenomenon for years, and were making plans to eliminate it when the pandemic arrived, creating an upswell in new subscriptions. Now that this windfall has subsided and the company is under pressure to find new avenues for growth, the password-problem is back on the table. Enforcement is certain to be messy, as many "legitimate" users will want to access to their Netflix account while travelling or over mobile networks. Some worry that many users will choose to drop the service if the option for "family sharing" is eliminated entirely.

See also: [Netflix's Ad-Supported Tier Was Its Least Popular Plan, Analytics Firm Estimates](#) (Wall Street Journal)



[AMC plunges after theater company announces capital raise, proposes reverse stock split](#) (CNBC)

AMC Entertainment has had a no-good-very-bad year on Wall Street in 2022, with the company's stock price declining more than 80% from its high at the beginning of the year. Unlike Netflix, the decline was not due directly to the business performance, which improved considerably throughout the year. The company's box office revenues more than doubled in 2022 compared with the pandemic doldrums of 2021.

AMC's challenge was a hangover effect from the stunning rise in the company's share price driven by retail investors who stepped in to support the company during the early

days of the pandemic. When AMC's "reddit rally" began in January 2021, its shares were trading for less than \$2 per share and the company was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. What began as a trending "joke" – see #SaveAMC – became a real "thing", with shares shooting up to as much as \$70/share.

Eventually, the sugar-high of sentimental movie lovers wore off and the reality of a long-term decline in revenues coupled with a massive debt load from pre-pandemic acquisitions took its toll. AMC was wise to squirrel away some of its new-found resources to fund new ventures, up to an included recent rumor-that it was negotiating with its bankrupt competitor Cineworld to take over a significant number of its Regal Cinemas locations. With the low trading price of its shares, AMC may no longer have the resources necessary to complete the deal.

AMC's execs are now floating the possibility of a "reverse stock split", in hopes that it would increase the total value of all outstanding shares. Wall Street was very negative about the prospect of this maneuver, driving down AMC shares by an additional 20% at the end of a difficult year.

See also: [AMC Held Talks About Acquiring Theaters From Bankrupt Cineworld](#) (Wall Street Journal)

[James Gunn Addresses Online Backlash to DC Decisions: 'Disrespectful Outcry Will Never, Ever Affect Our Actions'](#) (IndieWire)

In 2023, Warner Bros. is making significant changes in the direction it is pursuing for the DC Extended Universe, starting with the appointment of acclaimed filmmaker James Gunn as the co-CEO of DC Studios. Gunn has created success with multiple superhero franchises including the Suicide Squad, Guardians of the Galaxy and Avengers.

WB made the move to jumpstart its DC movies, which have chronically underperformed when compared with other big-budget superhero franchises. Gunn's new role coincides with a turnover in top-tier talent, with Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, Henry Cavill as Superman, and now Dwayne Johnson as Black Adam exiting their respective franchises.

Gunn's new look has come up against disappointment from DC superfans. In a Twitter thread from December 19th, Gunn pushed back calling the online criticism as "disrespectful" and "unkind.". He went on to say that the creative changes ahead have been made with "sincere hearts & integrity & always with the story in mind."

With Marvel in a weakened position... all of their 2022 releases grossed less than \$1 billion... it will be interesting to see if Gunn can seize the opportunity to elevate the image of DC as a top-tier creator of superhero blockbusters.

See also: [Dwayne Johnson: Black Adam Won't Be in 'First Chapter' of James Gunn-Led DC Universe, but May Return \(Variety\)](#)



DC Co-CEO James Gunn

MARTIN GROVE'S Hollywood Report



"WATER" Could Flow Into Best Picture Race

As AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER settles in for a long winter's nap at the boxoffice with no real competition for about six weeks, its release plan is well suited to driving it for Oscar consideration.

WATER is now the bright new shiny awards object to focus on after many months when other titles struggled to get into the early Oscar conversation and stay there. As WATER flows through the winter weeks with its cume escalating, awards voters will have ongoing awareness of its success.

Because the Academy's new far flung globally diverse members typically ignore mainstream hits when they

nominate best pictures, WATER's timing is particularly good. Falling ratings for awards telecasts are now so serious a problem that awards givers realize they need something competing for best picture that viewers have actually seen and will root for.

When WATER was still under wraps, media pundits called TOP GUN: MAVERICK the right kind of film -- critically acclaimed & a boxoffice giant that kept theatres alive this year -- to get a best picture nod. Later, some analysts also suggested GLASS ONION: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY, despite its streaming roots.

Now with WATER there's a contender that actually straddles the worlds of art (with auteur filmmaker James Cameron -- pictured) & money (with over \$660M worldwide & growing daily). A best picture nom for WATER could be seen as the best solution to putting a mainstream movie in Oscar's top race.

Awards Scene to Sizzle Soon

After smoldering for months, the awards scene will start sizzling before the New Year is very old.

Ironically, it's the recently resurrected Golden Globes that will bring the awards world back to life. The HFPA's 80th annual Globes will be telecast Tue., 1/10 by NBC, which scrapped last year's show after accusations by publicists & studios of no HFPA diversity & alleged financial improprieties. But after a year in the Hollywood deep freeze, many

publicists were eager to have the Globes back again since the media exposure their winning clients get attracts Academy members' attention.

The real guessing game now is who will or won't be sitting at those champagne stocked tables in the Beverly Hilton's International Ballroom. Brendan Fraser (pictured), a best actor-drama nominee for THE WHALE, has already said he won't be there, reminding us of his charges of being groped by ex-HFPA president Phil Berk (who's denied it) at an HFPA event in 2003.

The big question mark is Tom Cruise, who's a producer of TOP GUN: MAVERICK, which is a best picture-drama nominee. Cruise made a point last year of returning the three Globes he'd previously won. Heads would definitely turn if he turned up for what used to be known as Hollywood's Party Night of the Year.

Happily, in the days immediately after the Globes, some prime awards givers will announce their noms or the start of noms voting. On the calendar for 1/11 are DGA & SAG noms. 1/12 will bring the Academy's start of nominations voting (through 1/17) and the PGA's announcement of noms. The Critics Choice Awards will be handed out 1/15 & SAG will start voting for winners 1/18.



Click to play Screendollars' [BOXOFFICE AUTOPSY](#) podcast with CNN/Hollywood Reporter veteran Martin Grove... focusing on PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH & other Christmas openings... and looking at the awards season as it starts heating up.



Studio Release Calendar (12/30 – 1/13)

12/30/22 (Week 52)

Prior Year Results

2021 Week 52 - Box Office: \$143,799,628; Openings: Sing 2 (\$22.3M FSS; \$162.8M Total), The Matrix Resurrections (\$10.7M FSS; \$37.7M Total), The King's Man (\$5.9M FSS; \$37.2M Total), American Underdog (\$5.9M FSS; \$26.5M Total), A Journal for Jordan (\$2.2M FSS; \$6.5M Total)

A Man Called Otto (Sony)	PG-13 Comedy Drama	126	Digital, Flat, 5.1 Digital	Dolby	NY/LA Academy Award Qualifier Run
Alice, Darling (Lionsgate Premiere)	R Psychological Thriller	89	Digital, Flat, 5.1 Digital	Dolby	LA Exclusive

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Turn Every Page - The Adventures of Robert Caro and Robert Gottlieb (Sony Pictures Classics)	PG Documentary	112	Digital, Flat, 5.1	NY/LA
White Noise (Netflix)	RI Documentary	94	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Theatrical Streaming
Human Flowers of Flesh (Cinema Guild)	NR Drama	106	Digital, Flat, 5.1	12/31 NY/LA

1/6/23 (Week 1)

Prior Year Results

2022 Week 1 Box Office: \$62,816,612; Openings: The 355 (\$4.6M FSS; 14.6M Total)

M3gan (Universal) As expected, young females are the primary audience. 2022 Horror box office: NOPE (\$123.2M), SMILE (\$105.8M), THE BLACK PHONE (\$90M), SCREAM (\$82M), HALLOWEEN ENDS (\$64M), BARBARIAN (\$40M).	PG-13 Horror Sci-Fi Thriller	82A	Digital, Scope (2.39), 5.1, Dolby Atmos	Wide (3,500) \$20M-\$25M FSS \$53M-\$55M+ Total
A Man Called Otto (Sony)	Comedy Drama	126	Digital, Flat, 5.1, Dolby Atmos, DTS-X	Limited Expansion
Women Talking (UA Releasing)	PG-13 Drama	104	Digital, Scope, 5.1 4D	1/3 Expansion
Corsage (IFC Select)	NR Period Drama	115	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Moderate
The Subtle Art Of Not Giving F#%l (Universal)	R Documentary	97	Digital, Flat, 5.1	1/4 Limited
The Conformist (Kino Lorber) 4K Restoration	R Drama	111	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Alcarras (MUBI) Spain/Italy Catalan and Spanish with English subtitles. Spain's Oscar Entry.	NR Drama	120	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Lincoln Center/NYC
Candy Land (Quiver)	NR Horror	93	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited/Streaming
The Sixth Secret (Gravitas Ventures)	NR Comedy	92	Digital, Flat, 5.1	1/10 Limited
The Old Way (Saban Films)	R Western	95	Digital, Flat, 5.1	1/6 Limited 1/13 streaming

1/13/23 (Week 2)

Prior Year Results

2022 Week 2 Box Office: \$85,271,673; Openings: Scram (\$33.9M FSS; \$81.6M Total), Belle (\$4.0M FSS; \$60.6M Total)

Plane (Lionsgate)	R Action Thriller	107	Digital, Scope, 5.1	Wide (2,500+) \$10M-\$11M FSS \$25M-\$30M Total
House Party (Warner Bros.)	R Comedy	100	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Wide (2,500+) \$8M-\$9M FSS \$20M-\$22M Total
A Man Called Otto (Sony/Columbia)	Comedy Drama	126	Digital, Flat, 5.1, Dolby Digital	Wide Expansion
Shin Ultraman (Fathom)	PG Anime	112	Digital, Flat, 5.1	1/11-13 Event Cinema
The Devil Conspiracy (Samuel Goldwyn)	R Horror	111	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
The Seven Faces of Jane (Gravitas Ventures)	NR Drama	91	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
The Headmistress (Indican Pictures)	NR Horror	89	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Saint Omer (NEON/Super) French with English subtitles. France's Oscar Entry	NR Drama	118	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Lincoln Center/NYC

The Offering (Alfa Pictures)	NRI Horror	93	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Skinamarink (IFC Midnight)	NR Horror	100	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited/Streaming
The Price We Pay (Lionsgate Premiere)	Action Thriller	85	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited/Streaming

1/20/23 (Week 3)

Prior Year Results

2022 Week 3 Box Office: \$46,041,894; Openings: Redeeming Love (\$3.5M FSS; \$9.2M Total), The King's Daughter (\$.7M FSS; \$1.8M Total)

Missing (Sony)	PG-13 Mystery Suspense	111	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Wide (3,000)
Alice, Darling (Lionsgate Premiere)	R Psychological Thriller	89	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Expansion
When You Finish Saving The World (A24)	R Comedy	88	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Close (A24)	PG-13 Drama	105	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
That Time I Got Reincarnated As A Slime The Movie Scarlett (Crunchyroll)	NA Anime (Subbed & Dubbed)	N/A	N/A	Limited
Fear (Hidden Empire Film Group)	R Horror	85A	Digital, 5.1	Limited
The Son (Sony Pictures Classics)	PG-13	123	Digital, Scope, 5.1	NY/LA
Detective Knight: Independence (Lionsgate Premiere)	R Action Drama	80-	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Kids Vs. Aliens (RLJE)	NR Horror	75	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited/Streaming
Blaze (Gravitas Ventures)	NR Drama	101	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
In From the Side (Strand)	NR Sports Drama	134	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited
Alone At Night (Vertical Entertainment)	NR Horror	104	Digital, Flat, 5.1	Limited/Streaming

Release Changes

MPA Ratings Updates

Screening Room

[Click to play](#) our **BOXOFFICE BUZZ** look at Sony/TriStar's **WHITNEY HOUSTON: I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY**, which celebrates Whitney Houston's life and music...tracking her journey from obscurity to musical superstardom.



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Missing

Sony
1/20/23 - Wide
Poster, Trailer



That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime the Movie: Scarlet Bond

Crunchyroll
1/20/23 - Limited
Poster, Trailer



Of an Age

Focus Features
2/10/23 - Limited
Poster, Teaser Trailer



Book Club: The Next Chapter

Sony
5/12/23 - Wide
New Poster, Trailer



Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse

Sony
6/2/23 - Wide
New Poster, Trailer