

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian films at the local box office in 2009

Thursday 21 January 2010: The 418 films screened in Australian cinemas in 2009 grossed \$1.09 billion, making last year's total box office the highest on record. Of those films, 50 were Australian, accounting for \$54.8 million or 5.0 per cent of the total, according to Screen Australia analysis of Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) data. This is the highest number of Australian films to be screened annually in over 25 years and also marks the greatest domestic share since 2001, when a combination of *Moulin Rouge*, *Lantana*, *The Man Who Sued God* and *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles* took the Australian earnings to \$64.4 million (7.8 per cent).

Mao's Last Dancer was the top-grossing Australian film in 2009, with Bruce Beresford's adaptation of Li Cunxin's best-selling memoir achieving \$15.0 million over the last three months of the year. Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* followed, cementing its position as the second highest grossing Australian film of all time by adding a further \$10.6 million to its cumulative box office total of \$37.6 million. The science fiction feature *Knowing* directed by Alex Proyas placed third with \$7.6 million. *Charlie & Boots* claimed fourth position taking \$3.9 million followed by Warwick Thornton's critically acclaimed feature debut *Samson & Delilah* which grossed \$3.2 million at the Australian box office.

"Australian audiences embraced the diversity of stories produced by Australian filmmakers in 2009. Reports show that 1.4 million more Australians went to the cinema to see Australian films in 2009 than 2008 – a 45 per cent increase on the previous year," said **Ruth Harley**, Screen Australia Chief Executive. "The top five films provide a snapshot of the impressive array of genres on offer in 2009 across all release categories, from the confronting, yet ultimately uplifting, drama depicted in *Samson & Delilah* and *Mao's Last Dancer*, to the romance of *Australia*, the laughter of *Charlie & Boots* and the special effect-driven action of *Knowing*."

"Cinema is a hit-driven industry," Dr Harley continued, "and while box office is a lead indicator of a film's performance, it is important to note that it represents just one way in which audiences engage with Australian content."

"Our Research Unit has been analysing case studies of films over their entire first-release life cycle. *Kokoda*, for example, which took \$3.2 million at the box office in 2006, recorded approximately 316,000 admissions. The film went on to achieve in excess of 1.3 million viewings in the two and a half years from cinema release to first free-to-air television broadcast. Cinema admissions accounted for just 24 per cent of these viewings. But this proportion of cinema admissions varies depending on the title. *Footy Legends* which achieved just under one million viewings provides another example. Cinema accounted for only 6 per cent of viewings of this film, with a higher proportion of viewings coming from subscription and free-to-air television broadcasts."

"It's a high priority for Screen Australia in 2010 to better understand downstream viewings as we refine a new range of measures to reflect audience engagement with Australian screen production," Dr Harley concluded.

Scope and definitions

Australian share of the box office is calculated based on the results for projects under Australian creative control, including those that are 100 per cent foreign financed, as well as projects where creative control is shared between Australian and foreign partners with a balanced mix of Australian and foreign elements in the key creative positions ('co-productions').

The classification of projects under these definitions is undertaken by Screen Australia's Strategy & Research Unit, and once determined, the classification flows through all project-related outputs of the Unit. This includes the National Survey of Feature Film and TV Drama Production, and the online statistics compilation *Get the Picture*, as well as reporting on box office and DVD share.

The classification is unrelated to whether or not a project has been certified as eligible for the Producer Offset, as the Strategy & Research Unit does not have direct access to this information. Administration of the Offset is governed by the secrecy provisions of the Tax Act and only the taxpayer, in this case the production company, can share information about their tax affairs, including the Offset status of their projects.

Box office facts and figures

In October 2009, Screen Australia released analysis of data from the Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) exploring the release strategies applied to Australian films and their performance relative to films released from other regions.

This analysis included the calendar years 2005–08, plus 2009 up to 6 October. It reported films released in a particular year as opposed to the number of films screened, as seen in the snapshot provided. The earlier report can be downloaded from Screen Australia's website.

2009 results

The 50 Australian films screening in 2009 earned \$54.8 million during the year, representing 5.0 per cent of the total box office, up on the five-year average of 4.0 per cent.

Based on an average ticket price of \$11.99, admissions rose by 44.7 per cent to 4.6 million, over one million more than the five-year average of 3.4 million.

Australian films with Limited (up to 20 prints) and Specialty release strategies (up to 100 prints) earned 17.8 per cent and 13.3 per cent of the box office in these release categories.

Five Australian films screening during the year had releases wider than 100 prints. These films accounted for 71.5 per cent of the total box office earned by Australian films in 2009. This included the 2009 earnings of the Blockbuster release ***Australia***.

Details in table next page.

Box office share by country of origin and release strategy in 2009:

Origin		Total	By release strategy				
			Limited (0-19 prints)	Specialty (20-99 prints)	Mainstream (100-199 prints)	Wide (200-399 prints)	Blockbuster (400+ prints)
Australia	No. titles	50	30	15	2	2	1
	Share of titles	12.0%	14.2%	21.7%	3.6%	2.9%	8.3%
	Total box office	\$54.8m	\$5.4m	\$10.2m	\$5.9m	\$22.6m	\$10.6m
	Box office share	5.0%	17.8%	13.3%	4.3%	3.9%	4.2%
US	No. titles	213	62	31	48	62	10
	Total box office	\$899.4m	\$10.8m	\$30.4m	\$120.0m	\$533.6m	\$205.1m
	Box office share	82.8%	35.6%	39.6%	87.1%	91.2%	80.0%
UK	No. titles	34	14	13	3	3	1
	Total box office	\$98.2m	\$1.6m	\$28.1m	\$4.6m	\$23.4m	\$40.6m
	Box office share	9.0%	5.2%	36.5%	3.3%	4.0%	15.8%
Total including Rest of World	No. titles	418	212	69	56	69	12
	Total box office	\$1,086.0m	\$30.4m	\$76.9m	\$137.8m	\$584.6m	\$256.4m

Source: Screen Australia analysis of Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) data.
Notes: Release strategy is based on opening day prints. Data includes all films screening, 347 releases from 2009 and 71 from previous years. Box office is based on 2009 earnings only.

Australian films in 2010

A selection of Australian films with an anticipated release in 2010:

Title	Producer	Director	Writer
Accidents Happen	Anthony Anderson	Andrew Lancaster	Brian Carbee
Animal Kingdom	Liz Watts	David Michôd	David Michôd
Arctic Blast (Aust/Canadian Co-pro)	Gina Black, Stefan Wodoslawsky	Brian Trenchard-Smith	Jason Bourque
Being in Heaven	Michael Rowland, John Coroneos, Paulina Rowland	Michael Rowland	Michael Rowland
Beneath Hill 60	Bill Leimbach, Jeremy Sims	Jeremy Sims	David Roach
Bran Nue Dae	Robyn Kershaw, Graeme Isaac	Rachel Perkins	Rachel Perkins, Reg Cribb
Cane Toads: The Conquest	Mark Lewis	Mark Lewis	
Daybreakers	Chris Brown, Bryan Furst, Sean Furst	Michael Spierig, Peter Spierig	Michael Spierig, Peter Spierig
Dirt Music	Miranda Culley, Phillip Noyce	Phillip Noyce	Justin Monjo, Pip Karmel
Emulsion	Jonathan Ogilvie	Jonathan Ogilvie	Jonathan Ogilvie
Griff the Invisible	Nicole O'Donohue	Leon Ford	Leon Ford
Guardians of Ga'Hoole	Zareh Nalbandian	Zack Snyder	John Orloff, Emil Stern
Horseman, The	Steven Kastrissios, Rebecca Dakin	Steven Kastrissios	Steven Kastrissios
I Love You Too	Yael Bergman, Laura Waters	Daina Reid	Peter Helliar
Independent, The	Jim Xyga	Andrew O'Keefe, John Studley	Andrew O'Keefe, John Studley
Kin	Nicole Minchin	Amanda Jane	Christine Bartlett

Long Weekend, The	Nigel Odell, Gary Hamilton	Jamie Blanks	Everett De Roche
Lou	Michael McMahon, Belinda Chayko, Tony Ayres, Helen Bowden	Belinda Chayko	Belinda Chayko
Loved Ones, The	Mark Lazarus	Sean Byrne	Sean Byrne
Matching Jack	David Parker, Nadia Tass, Richard Keddie	Nadia Tass	Lynne Renew, David Parker
Punishment	Peter Glover	Danny Matier	Danny Matier
Red Hill	Patrick Hughes	Patrick Hughes	Patrick Hughes
Reef, The	Andrew Traucki, Michael Robertson	Andrew Traucki	
Road Train	Michael Robertson	Dean Francis	Clive Hopkins
South Solitary	Marian Macgowan	Shirley Barrett	Shirley Barrett
Tomorrow, When the War Began	Andrew Mason	Stuart Beattie	Stuart Beattie
Tree, The (Aust/France Co-pro)	Sue Taylor, Yael Fogiel	Julie Bertucelli	Julie Bertucelli, Elizabeth Mars
Uninhabited	Silvana Milat, Bill Bennett, Paul Quin	Bill Bennett	
Waiting City, The	Jamie Hilton, Claire McCarthy	Claire McCarthy	Claire McCarthy
Wog Boy 2: Kings of Mykonos	Emile Sherman, Nick Giannopoulos	Peter Andrikidis	Chris Anastassiades, Nick Giannopoulos

Source: Screen Australia.

Update note:

The 'Scope and definitions' section was added to this media release 10 February 2010