

### Film

# 'Blockers', 'Place' bet SXSW buzz equals big box office

LOS ANGELES, April 2. (RTRS): "Blockers" and "A Quiet Place" are both hoping to leverage film festival raves into box office success when they open in theaters this month.

On paper, the two films couldn't be more different. "Blockers," is a comedy. Think of it as a feminist spin on "Superbad."

In contrast, "A Quiet Place" is a brutal thriller about a dystopian future in which arthropod-like monsters hunt humans using their superior sense of sound. It also functions as a meditation on parenthood and paranoia.

Despite their stylistic differences and divergent subject matters, the two movies share more than just a common release date of April 6. They're trying to prove that audiences will come out for a movie that isn't "Black Panther." So far this winter, that's the only film that's really been able to tap into the cultural zeitgeist. Other new entries, such as "Red Sparrow" and "Pacific Rim Uprising" have largely gotten the cold shoulder from audiences.

Analysts think that "A Quiet Place" and "Blockers" will fare better, and with budgets of \$17 million and \$21 million, the pictures represent modest risks for their backers. Part of the optimism stems from their experiences at SXSW, where the movies received a raucous response from audiences. Buzz for the films has been building since they screened at the Austin-based gathering, but history is rife with examples of movies such as "Everybody Wants Some" and "Scott vs the World" that were embraced in festivals like SXSW or Comic-Con, only to fail to attract a great deal of mainstream attention in their theatrical release.

"Huge awareness doesn't always translate to big box office," Paul Dergarabedian, a film analyst at comScore, warned. "You can have movies that everyone is talking about, but people still have to want to see the movie."

### Wright directing 'Woman in Window'

Though Dergarabedian says it will be a highly competitive weekend, he believes that people are hungry for a good horror movie or comedy.

"Horror movies and comedies generally can find an audience," he said. "They are the best to see in the communal environment of a movie theater. There is an electricity that's created in the air when a bunch of people are scared, likewise when people are laughing or discovering something humorous for the first time."

### Projections

With two weeks to go, there's still a wide range of projections on where the films will open. Universal's "Blockers" is eyeing a release between \$13 million and \$21 million, while Paramount's "A Quiet Place" is tracking to open between \$16 million and \$30 million. If the films land on the higher end of those estimates it will be a major win for their producers and help ensure they will be profitable.

Shawn Robbins, chief analyst at BoxOffice.com, thinks the it's risky to open against one another. He notes their mature content means that they may lean heavily on the same older teen and adult crowds, which could result in some cannibalization.

John Krasinski, who also co-wrote, directed and executive produced "A Quiet Place," stars along with his wife, Emily Blunt. This marks their first on-screen collaboration, a fact that could draw more awareness and interest in the film, particularly as they play a married couple.

It also helps that the picture isn't just a fest, analysts say. While horror movies are having a moment at the box office, given the acclaim of Jordan Peele's Academy Award winning "Get Out," and M. Night Shyamalan's "Split" and Andy Muschietti's "It," the genre-bending "A Quiet Place" could add another twist on horror to work in the film's favor.

### Also:

LOS ANGELES: Joe Wright will direct "The Woman in the Window," a big screen adaptation of A.J. Finn's best-seller, Variety has learned. Tracy Letts, the Pulitzer Prize winning writer of "August, Osage County," will pen the script, and Scott Rudin ("No Country for Old Men," "The Social Network") and Eli Bush ("Lady Bird") will produce the picture. Fox 2000 is backing the project.

"The Woman in the Window" centers on the reclusive Dr Anna Fox, who spends her days holed in in her New York City brownstone, fortifying herself with too much wine, binge watching old movies, and spying on her neighbors. In the "Rear Window" vein, Anna eventually witnesses something she shouldn't while keeping tabs on the Russell family, the seemingly picture perfect clan that lives across the way. The thriller has been a brisk seller since debuting in stores in January.

LOS ANGELES: Malik Vitthal has been tapped to direct "Body Cam" for Paramount Players, sources tell Variety.

The project was the first major purchase for Paramount Players chief Brian Robbins after coming over from AwesomenessTV last year and is now a top priority for the studio.

Nick McCarthy wrote the latest draft of the spec originally penned by Richmond Riedel.

Described as "Get Out" meets "End of Watch," the story follows several LAPD officers who are haunted by a malevolent spirit that is tied to the murder of a black youth at the hands of two white cops -- all of which was caught on a body cam video that was destroyed in a cover-up.

### Variety



This cover image released by Warner Bros Pictures shows characters Aech (left), and Parzival in a scene from 'Ready Player One', a film by Steven Spielberg, which earned a solid \$53.2 million in theaters. (AP)

### Film

## Del Toro to produce next films for Lopez, Castaneda

# 'Everything' brilliant, captivating docu

By Owen Gleiberman

Every so often, when you hear that a painting by Picasso just sold at auction for a record \$179 million, or that a Pollock or a Basquiat or a Jeff Koons now routinely fetch prices worthy of a Silicon Valley start-up, it's easy to wonder what, exactly, is going on. Is this a true expression of the art's value? Or is it the symptom of some skyrocketing hothouse bubble that has decadently transformed art into gold?

"The Price of Everything," Nathaniel Kahn's brilliant and captivating documentary about how the art world got converted into a money market, is shrewd enough to know that the answer is both. The movie gazes, with a good amount of woe (but also with the pleasurable voyeuristic charge that tends to accompany displays of great wealth), at what the art world has become: the staggering auctions at Sotheby's and Christie's, where masterpieces, old and new, are put on the block to be sold at prices that are 10 times higher than what they would have fetched just 15 years ago; the elite private collectors who are the ones snapping up all the paintings — a global demimonde of connoisseur/investors who, over the last three decades, have made the art market into a de facto stock market, complete with trading and flipping and commodities futures.

And the artists themselves? A majority of the superstars are dead, a handful are alive, but either way they've been turned into iconic blue-chip corporations, with their paintings treated as a luxury brand.

It all sounds, on the surface, quite greedy and vulgar and trendy and disreputable. And it probably is. Yet "The Price of Everything" isn't a simplistic rant against the money culture. Early on, an auctioneer from Sotheby's makes a highly intuitive point: that great art, almost by nature, needs to be greatly valued (and by that he means expensive), because that's the culture's way of protecting it. If a Rembrandt or a Da Vinci or a Bruegel weren't regarded as "priceless," then it wouldn't survive through the centuries.

And who gets to determine how much a given piece of art is worth? There's no formula; on some level, it's the collective voice of curators and critics and the public. The point is that the market may appear decadent, but that doesn't mean it's false. It's an expression of something: what the culture values. When the works of Andy Warhol began to fetch prices comparable to those of Picasso, it was because the perception of Warhol's aesthetic had risen in the world. And rightly so.

Yet if "The Price of Everything" acknowledges the organic (and compelling) aspects of the art market, it also points to the ways that something has gone very wrong. This is far from the first documentary to take on the symbiotic dance of art and money, but Kahn, best known for the 2003 confessional portrait of himself and his father, "My Architect," has conceived the film in a way that's at once journalistic and philosophical. "The Price of Everything" is an expose that's also a free-wheeling meditation on what art is.

### Fantastic

Kahn, a fantastic interviewer, got access to a major range of inside players from the art world. He talks to the gallery owner Mary Boone, to collectors like the hawkish 92-year-old Chicago philanthropist Stefan Edlis (who loves beauty, but can pinpoint the commercial value of a single brushstroke), to auction-house heavies like Amy Cappellazzo, chairman of the Fine Art division of Sotheby's, who's like a puckish Gouguem Weaver character, caught between her art obsession and her capitalist fever, and to artists like Gerhard Richter, who claim (with a wink) to decry the system that has elevated them.

The movie reveals how the current wave of art-commodity mania started in the '70s — specifically, on Oct 18, 1973, the day that Robert Scull, a New York taxi-fleet impresario who was a passionate collector of abstract expressionist and pop art, sold off 50 of his most prized works in an auction at the Sotheby Park-Bernet Gallery. At the time, the prices were jaw-dropping (though they now sound fire-

sale cheap). Jasper Johns' 1961 "Target," for instance, was sold for \$135,000. The painting is currently in the possession of Stefan Edlis, who bought it in 1997 for \$10 million, and says that it's now worth \$100 million.

### Also:

LOS ANGELES: Mexican director-writer Issa Lopez was sitting in the audience at Guillermo del Toro's second of three master classes when the recent Academy Award winner revealed that he planned to produce the next films of two women helmers over the next two years: Animator Karla Castaneda and Lopez.

"You should have seen my face when he mentioned my name," she told Variety.

Castaneda, whose stop-motion animated short "Jacinta" won at the 2008 Guadalajara fest and who took the Mexican Oscar equivalent, the Ariel, for her second stop-motion animated short, "La Noria," in 2013, is working on her feature debut in the same medium. Del Toro is planning on providing further impetus to the animation film industry in Mexico.

Lopez began as a writer of hit Mexican romcoms such as Disney's "Ladies Night," and Columbia Pictures' "Casi Divas," which she also directed, and then made a surprising turn to genre filmmaking last year with the critically acclaimed "Tigers are Not Afraid" ("Vuelven"), which counts on Stephen King and Del Toro among its fans. She was also a co-scribe on Gabriel Ripstein's 2015 Berlinale Best First Feature winner, "600 Miles," which deals with the less frothy themes of cross-border drugs and weapons smuggling.

Written and directed by Lopez, "Tigers" debuted at the Fantastic Fest 2017 where she became the first woman — and Mexican — to win the Best Horror Feature director award. It also made a sweep of the major awards at Screamfest 2017, where it won Best Picture and Best Director among other prizes. "We've won 14 prizes so far but we still have 22 genre festivals ahead of us," she said. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Steven Spielberg has found his way back to the top of the box office with the action-adventure "Ready Player One," while Tyler Perry has scored again with "Acrimony."

Studio estimates on Sunday say Spielberg's virtual reality-focused film earned a solid \$53.2 million in its first four days in theaters from 4,234 locations since opening Wednesday night, with \$41.2 million of that coming from the three-day weekend.

Not adjusted for inflation, it's Spielberg's best opening in a decade following "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," which launched with \$100.1 million in 2008. Aside from "The BFG," Spielberg has lately favored smaller historical dramas instead of the big-scale blockbusters of his heyday. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: "Ready Player One" kicked off its opening weekend with a strong international debut, particularly in China.

The VR fantasy saw the biggest Warner Bros' opening weekend ever in China, where it led with \$61.7 million from 18,200 screens. The latest from Steven Spielberg released day and date internationally in 62 markets, claiming \$128 million since Tuesday previews. With a four-day domestic opening of \$52.3 million, the worldwide weekend total rounds to \$181.2 million. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Sony Pictures' "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" debuted at No. 1 on both national home video sales charts for the week ended March 24.

The adventure comedy — a sequel to the 1995 original "Jumanji" — was a surprise hit at the box office, earning \$402 million in US theaters and nearly \$950 million worldwide. Now that it's available for home viewing, the film bowed in the top spot on both the NPD VideoScan overall disc sales chart, which tracks combined DVD and Blu-ray Disc sales, as well as the dedicated Blu-ray Disc sales chart for the week ended March 24.

The original "Jumanji" starred Robin Williams and was based on a children's book about a board game come to life. The follow-up features a group of teenagers sucked into a video game version of Jumanji, where they take on avatars played by Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jack Black, Karen Gillan and Nick Jonas. (RTRS)



Hart



Johnson

LOS ANGELES: Miranda July will start production on an untitled family drama in late May with Plan B and Annapurna producing.

The companies made the announcement Thursday. The film follows the story of a character named Old Dolio and how her world is turned upside-down when her criminal parents invite an outsider to join their biggest heist yet.

The project will be July's third film and the first she will not star in. The cast has not been announced. Youree Henley will also produce.

Henry's credits include Sofia Coppola's "The Beguiled" and Mike Mills' "20th Century Women."

July wrote, directed, and starred in the 2005 film "Me and You and Everyone We Know," which won a special jury prize at the

Sundance Film Festival and the Camera d'Or at Cannes. She also wrote, directed, and starred in 2011's "The Future."

July's most recent book is the novel "The First Bad Man." Her collection of stories, "No One Belongs Here More Than You," won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award and has been published in 23 countries. (RTRS)