

# Australian Films – 2001 Box Office Share

The Australian film industry has produced a strong performance in the competition for box office share in 2001. Australian films earned \$63.5 million or 7.8 per cent of the total Australian box office, maintaining market share – an excellent result given the substantial overall increase in box office figures.

This result for Australian films is the highest total ever in dollar terms, and is very close in market share to the 2000 figure of 7.9 per cent.

The 2001 result was the fifth highest share for Australian films since 1990. It was the twelfth highest result since data collection started in 1977.

## Australian films' share at the box office 1991 to 2001

Year	Total Gross	% share
1991	19.1	6
1992	29.7	9
1993	24.7	6
1994	46.6	10
1995	19.8	4
1996	43.7	8
1997	28.4	5
1998	25.6	4
1999	21.1	3
2000	54.2	7.9
2001	63.4	7.8

Source: MPDAA and AFC

Four Australian films earned over \$5 million each in 2001. Topping the list was *Moulin Rouge*, the third highest grossing film for the year. It is currently the third highest grossing Australian film of all time (after *Crocodile Dundee* and *Babe*) and fifteenth in the overall list. It also came in at number ten on the UK box office chart, 37th on the US chart and 24th overall for international box office takings.

Six Australian films earned over a million dollars each in 2001, compared to eight in 2000, five in 1999, nine in 1998, and five or six titles a year between 1991 and 1997.

The top grossing Australian films for 2001 were:

Film	Release Date	Distributor	Box Office
1 <i>Moulin Rouge</i>	24/5/2001	Fox	\$27,431,931
2 <i>Lantana</i>	4/10/2001	Palace	\$9,883,101
3 <i>The Man Who Sued God</i>	25/10/2001	BVI	\$8,108,300
4 <i>Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles</i> (Aus/US)	12/4/2001	UIP/Universal	\$7,759,103
5 <i>The Bank</i>	6/9/2001	Footprint Films	\$2,451,648

Source: MPDAA at 31/12/2001

In addition to the top grossing titles mentioned above, one other Australian film – *Mullet* – earned over a million dollars.

The top grossing Australian films for 2000 were:

Film	Release Date	Distributor	Box Office
1 <i>The Dish</i>	19/10/2000	Roadshow	\$16,880,893
2 <i>The Wog Boy</i>	24/2/2000	Fox	\$11,448,547
3 <i>Looking For Alibrandi</i>	4/5/2000	Roadshow	\$8,300,454
4 <i>Chopper</i>	4/8/2000	Palace	\$5,718,014
5 <i>Me Myself I</i>	20/4/2000	BVI	\$2,698,330

Source: MPDAA at 31/12/2000

## The Figures

While Australian films performed well in terms of total dollars and box office share, the *total* box office for 2001 increased 17.8 per cent to \$812.4 million, up from \$689.5 million in 2000. This is the highest total box office ever.

In spite of the expectation of lower box office receipts due to the economic slowdown and world events, the Australian box office has performed well. This has been attributed to a combination of factors including successful industry-wide marketing initiatives and the increasing number of 'event' films, particularly those based on already established brands including *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*.

In terms of overall cinema admissions, there was a record 92.5 million admissions – the first time admissions have passed 90 million. The average ticket price was \$8.72 up from \$8.39 in 2000.

A total of 245 films were released in the Australian cinema market in 2001. There were 27 Australian releases – 23 feature films, three documentaries and one short feature.

The number of films released here and their Australian box office share by country of origin is as follows:

	Number of Films		% Box Office Share	
	2000	2001	2000	2001
Australia	22	27	7.9%	7.8%
US (mainly studio films)	167	165	82.8%	80.6%
UK films	29	14	6.1%	8.7%
Other (mainly Europe and Asia)	32	40	3.3%	2.9%
Total	250	245		

Source: AFC analysis of MPDAA data

The production value of the 27 Australian titles was \$166 million – estimated at just one per cent of the production value of the 165 US titles released in Australia in 2001. According to the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) the average budget for a major studio film (eg. Disney, Warner Bros, Universal) is A\$100 million (US\$55 million) with the average for a minor studio film (eg. Miramax, New Line) A\$40 million (US\$22 million).

Release patterns for the 23 Australian feature films were polarised into either a wide or narrow release. Five titles (22 per cent) were exhibited on over 100 screens with eight (35 per cent) exhibited on 10–29 screens and a further nine (39 per cent) exhibited on less than ten screens. This is very similar to the release patterns for the Australian features released in the two previous years (1999 and 2000).

## The Playing Field

Despite the sustained success of Australian box office results and a year where many commentators have acknowledged a lacklustre showing from Hollywood productions, Australian film continues to be dwarfed by the US film industry. Like most countries, the Australian film market is dominated by big budget US studio films that run vigorous and well-resourced marketing campaigns. The increasingly used strategy of 'front loading' a film – where heavily marketed films are given a wide distribution in the first days to capitalise on extensive media campaigns – ensured Hollywood's supremacy at the box office in 2001 with 'event' films like *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, *Pearl Harbour* and *Planet of the Apes*.

- The top ten films watched by Australians grossed an average \$23.3 million. *Shrek* was number one with \$31.5 million.
- The average negative costs (budget) of US studio films was US\$54.8 million (approx. A\$107.6 million) in 2000. The average budget of Australian films released last year was A\$6 million.
- In 2001, the top 50 films took 73.6 per cent of the box office (67.9 per cent in 2000). 42 of the top 50 were from the US. Of the remaining eight, four were Australian, three were British (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (UK/USA)*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Chicken Run*) and one was Chinese (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).

The performance of Australian films, vis-à-vis low budget independently produced films from other countries, continues to be strong.

- The 23 Australian feature films released in 2001 took an average of \$2.6 million each. The average result for the 14 UK films was \$4.2 million each – an increase from last year due to the presence of *Harry Potter* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*; the 40 foreign films (i.e. non-UK/US) fetched on average \$628,381 per film. (This compares to last year's result of 18 Australian feature films at an average of \$3 million each to 32 foreign films at \$700,654 per film.) The take of US films here was \$3.9 million per film.

2000			2001				
No of feature films	Total BO	Ave. BO	No of feature films	Total BO	Ave. BO		
Australia	18	\$54.2	\$3m	Australia	23	\$63.5	\$2.6m
UK	29	\$42.2	\$1.5m	UK*	14	\$70.9	\$4.2m
Other (mainly Europe & Asia)	32	\$22.4	\$700,654	Other (mainly Europe & Asia)	40	\$23.3	\$628,381
US	167	\$570.3	\$3.4m	US	165	\$654.8	\$3.9m

\*Includes *Harry Potter* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*

## International Comparisons

In contrast to previous years, there has been an across-the-board increase in local films' market share – particularly in local language markets. France gained a 40 per cent share of its local market compared with 28.5 per cent last year.<sup>1</sup> Danish films accounted for 30 per cent of its local admissions up 75 per cent from last year, and South Korean films gained a 45 per cent market share of its local box office up from 35 per cent in 2000 with eight local films in the top ten.<sup>2</sup> Other territories to see strong results for local films include Poland with a 25 per cent increase in admissions to local films, Japan,<sup>3</sup> Germany with 18 per cent of admissions (up from five per cent in 2000), Taiwan,<sup>4</sup> Hong Kong (up 24 per cent to 47 per cent, with four of its top five being local releases and *Shaolin Soccer* becoming the country's biggest-grossing film ever) and Spain (19 per cent, up from 10 per cent in 2000).<sup>5</sup> Italy achieved an 18 per cent share of admissions, Sweden a 26 per cent share of admissions up 12 per cent and the Czech Republic up 30 per cent of tickets sold. Local historical epic *Suriyothai* surpassed *Titanic* to become Thailand's most-watched film with almost double *Titanic's* record.

Commenting on the improved performance of local product across the world over the past year, local film journalist Lynden Barber claimed:

“Industry observers ... see the return of audiences to local films as a reflection of positive changes outside the US, especially in Asia. ... [T]hese include better funding initiatives by governments and finance sectors; rising professionalism among producers; greater creative sophistication from film-makers; and higher budgets and on-screen production values.”<sup>6</sup>

While local films garner larger shares of the box office around the world, the US film industry continues to grow. Estimates from the US indicate that the US box office will have risen by 8.5 per cent to US\$8 billion in 2001. This rise is largely attributed to the ‘event’ film and ‘front loading’ phenomenon as well as a particularly strong post-September fourth quarter.

## International Status

Australian films have received critical praise both in Australia and abroad. Having opened the Cannes Film Festival in May, *Moulin Rouge* went on to win three awards at the Golden Globes – Best Motion Picture: Musical or Comedy, Best Actress in a Musical or Comedy for Nicole Kidman and Best Original Score for Craig Armstrong. It has also been voted Best Picture of 2001 by the US National Board of Review and was recently nominated for eight Academy Awards including Best Picture. *Lantana* was the closing night film of the prestigious Toronto Festival and received a Special Mention for Excellence in Filmmaking at the 2001 US National Board of Review.

Paul Goldman’s *Australian Rules* and Rachel Perkins’ *One Night the Moon* were screened at the influential Sundance Film Festival for 2002. Ivan Sen’s *Beneath Clouds* screened In Competition at the Berlin International Film Festival taking out the Premiere First Movie Award – an award for the best debut film – as well as the Piper Heidsieck New Talent Award for seventeen-year-old lead, Danielle Hall. The Australian feature film *Walking on Water* and the short film *Delivery Day* also took out two awards each at the same festival.

In addition to the success of the Australian film industry at home, Australian filmmakers continue to make waves overseas. Victorian College of Arts graduate, Robert Luketic scored a major worldwide hit in his directorial debut with the US film *Legally Blonde*, earning close to US\$100 million in the US and US\$136 million worldwide, as well as a Golden Globe nomination for Best Motion Picture: Musical or Comedy. Other Australian filmmakers to have made an impact on world screens in 2001 include Scott Hicks, who directed *Hearts in Atlantis*, and cinematographers John Seale, who shot the box office hit *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, and Academy Award nominee Andrew Lesnie who shot *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*.

Rave reviews have gone to the expanding school of Australian acting talent including Cate Blanchett in *Bandits* and in *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*, along with Hugo Weaving; Guy Pearce in *Memento*; Nicole Kidman in *The Others*; Golden Globe winner and Academy Award nominee Russell Crowe in *A Beautiful Mind*; Hugh Jackman in *Kate and Leopold*; Heath Ledger in *A Knight’s Tale*; Naomi Watts in David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*; Eric Bana in Ridley Scott’s *Black Hawk Down*; and Frances O’Connor in Steven Spielberg’s *AI*.

## The Future

In September 2001, the Federal Government announced an increase in funds to the Australian film industry with a \$92.7 million package. As a part of this package, the AFC will receive new funding of \$3 million in 2002/2003, rising to \$5 million in 2003/2004. Kim Dalton, Chief Executive of the Australian Film Commission commented at the time:

“These additional funds, which the Government has committed to providing through to 2005/2006, mean that the AFC will now be able to boost its spending in the vital areas of script and professional development.”

The FFC received new funding of \$7.5 million, increasing to \$10.5 million in 2003. However, these additional funds are restricted to the funding of adult and children’s television drama. With some decrease in FFC revenues in recent years and with the completion this financial year of the Film Licensed Investment Companies (FLICs) scheme, overall, there will be a reduction in funding available for the production of Australian feature films.

2002 promises to be another exciting year for Australian film. Strong box office performances are expected from: Phillip Noyce’s *Rabbit Proof Fence*, Alex Proyas’ *Garage Days*, David Caesar’s *Dirty Deeds*, Bill Bennett’s *The Nugget*, Paul Goldman’s *Australian Rules* and Scott Roberts’ *The Hard Word*.

*Australian Film Commission, February 2002*

- 1 France levies an 11 per cent foreign film tax per ticket sold at the box office, which is used to subsidise French film production. Also, there is a minor quota requiring that five weeks per quarter be devoted to French films (four weeks for theatres that screened six weeks of French short subjects in the preceding quarter).
- 2 Korea has had a screen quota of 146 days/year since 1967.
- 3 40 per cent of Japan’s cinemas are dedicated to Japanese films.
- 4 There is a quota on the number of prints allowed into Taiwan as well as quotas on the number of simultaneous screens.
- 5 Spain has European content quotas.
- 6 *The Australian*, 7 December 2001, p15.

## APPENDIX I

### Australian Feature Films, Short Features and Documentaries released in 2001 theatrically in Australia

Title	Distributor
<i>The Bank</i>	Footprint Films
<i>Crocodile Dundee In Los Angeles</i>	UIP
<i>Dalkeith</i>	Producer
<i>Envy</i>	Producer
<i>The Goddess Of 1967</i>	Palace
<i>He Died With A Felafel In His Hand</i>	Roadshow
<i>In The Red</i>	Producer
<i>La Spagnola</i>	New Vision
<i>Lantana</i>	Palace
<i>Let's Get Skase</i>	Roadshow
<i>Love Brokers</i>	Producer
<i>Mallboy</i>	Buena Vista
<i>The Man Who Sued God</i>	Buena Vista
<i>The Monkey's Mask</i>	Footprint Films
<i>Moulin Rouge</i>	20th Century Fox
<i>Mullet</i>	Dendy/Globe
<i>Risk</i>	Roadshow
<i>Russian Doll</i>	UIP/Beyond
<i>Sensitive New Age Killer</i>	Tidepool
<i>Serenades</i>	Palace
<i>Silent Partner</i>	Palace
<i>Walk The Talk</i>	20th Century Fox
<i>YoIngu Boy</i>	Palace
<i>One Night The Moon</i> (Short Feature)	Dendy
<i>Facing The Music</i> (Documentary)	Ronin
<i>Mamadrama</i> (Documentary)	Sharmill
<i>My Khmer Heart</i> (Documentary)	Producer