

Hollywood Expects A Hot, Bountiful Summer

LOS ANGELES: Summer starts early this year in Hollywood with the potentially record-breaking release of "Avengers: Infinity War", and the marquee Marvel superheroes couldn't be coming at a better time.

The box office for the year is down nearly three per cent, and the industry is looking to redeem itself after last summer, which, despite hits like "Wonder Woman," had its worst performance in more than a decade.

Although all studios are embracing the year-round blockbuster schedule and massive hits can emerge in any month, like "Black Panther" in February, "It" in September and "Star Wars" in December, with work and school vacations, nothing can beat the summer's potential.

This summer movie going sea-

son, which typically runs from the first weekend in May through Labor Day, could get things back on track. Two of the most profitable franchises have major films on the slate. The Walt Disney Company and Marvel have "Avengers: Infinity War" (April 27) which some experts are predicting will score the biggest opening of all time, and Universal Pictures is releasing the sequel to the fifth highest domestic earner of all time, "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," on June 22.

And as with every summer, there are more than a handful of sequels and familiar brands coming to theatres, including: "Deadpool 2" (May 18); "Solo: A Star Wars Story" (May 25); "The Incredibles 2" (June 15); "Sicario: Day of the Soldado" (June 29); "The First Purge" (July 4); "Ant-

Man and the Wasp" (July 6); "Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation" (July 13); "The Equalizer 2" (July 20); "Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again!" (July 20); and "Mission: Impossible - Fallout" (July 27).

According to Box Office Mojo, in 2017, movie ticket sales were at a 25-year low, and competition for audience attention is only intensifying. Netflix has a whole slate of summer films too, from an Adam Sandler and Chris Rock comedy ("The Week Of," April 27) to the WWII-set adaptation of "The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society." This year too has shown a concentration of box office dollars on just a few films - "Black Panther," Fritz noted, accounted for 23 per cent of the ticket sales in the first three months of the year.

Universal has "Jurassic World" and "Mamma Mia!" sequels, sure, but it is also releasing Dwayne Johnson's action-thriller "Skyscraper" and its indie arm Focus Features has films like the dark dramedy "Tully" (May 4), with Charlize Theron, Spike Lee's "BlacKkKlansman" (Aug. 10) and documentaries about Mr. Rogers ("Won't You Be My Neighbour," June 8) and Pope Francis (May 18).

Warner Bros., home of Wonder Woman, Batman and the other DC Comics superheroes, doesn't have a major DC film on the slate (aside from the animated "Teen Titans GO! To the Movies," July 27). Instead, its slate boasts films like the star (and female)-driven "Ocean's 8," with Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Rihanna and others, comedies like "Tag"

(June 15) and "Life of the Party" (May 11), and an adaptation of the popular book "Crazy Rich Asians" (Aug. 17).

Beyond "Ocean's 8" there are a number of gender-flipped reboots and female-led comedies, like "Overboard" (May 4) with Anna Faris, the "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" remake "The Hustle" (June 29) with Anne Hathaway and Rebel Wilson, "Book Club" (May 18) with Jane Fonda, Diane Keaton, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen, and "The Spy Who Dumped Me" (Aug. 3) with Mila Kunis and Kate McKinnon.

Action fans can look forward to Mark Wahlberg as an intelligence officer trying to smuggle a police officer out of the country in "Mile 22" (Aug. 3) and Jason Statham fighting a shark in "The Meg" (Aug. 10).

'Black Panther' Screened In Riyadh



Visitors chat with an actress dressed in red carpet colors in front of posters of Hollywood stars during invitation-only screening, at the King Abdullah Financial District Theater, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Wednesday, April 18, 2018. Saudi Arabia held a private screening of the Hollywood-blockbuster "Black Panther" Wednesday, to herald the launch of movie theaters that are set to open to the public next month. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

'Mini-Me' Passes Away

LOS ANGELES: Actor Verne Troyer, who played Mini-Me in two of the "Austin Powers" comedy films, is dead. He was 49.

A statement on social media accounts on Friday read: "Verne was an extremely caring individual. He wanted to make everyone smile, be happy, and laugh. Anybody in need, he would help to any extent possible."

"Verne hoped he made a positive change with the platform he had and worked towards spreading that message every day."

Verne was also a fighter when it came to his own battles. Over the years he's struggled and won, struggled and won, struggled and fought some more, but unfortunately this time was too much."

In April 2017, Troyer announced on Facebook that he was being treated for alcohol addiction, something he had fought in the past.

Troyer featured in 58 movies



and TV shows which included his role as Mini-Me, in the diminutive clone of actor Mike Myers' character Dr. Evil, in "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me" and "Austin Powers in Goldmember".

Myers mourned the actor's demise calling Troyer the "consummate professional and a beacon of positivity".

Johnson Surprises A Young Fan

LOS ANGELES: Actor Dwayne Johnson surprised a high school student who asked him to go to prom with her.

Last weekend, Katie, a high school senior from Minnesota, asked the 45-year-old entertainer to her prom. Johnson did not agree to go to prom with the high school student, but he responded to the request by surprising the student, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Johnson rented out the area's

movie theatre for a special showing of his new movie for Katie and her friends.

He wrote in the clip's caption: "I was so impressed by this young lady's charm and confidence to even ask me (ladies always get shy in front of me) that I had to do something special. I decided to rent out an entire theatre (capacity 232 seats) in her town so Katie and her closest 232 friends and family can enjoy a special

screening of 'Rampage'. And all the free popcorn, candy and soda high school kids can consume! You're money's no good Katie... everything is on Uncle DJ."

He also taped a special message. In a video on Instagram, Katie is shown sitting in class as a special morning announcement comes on. Her face goes bright red as she hears the voice of her favourite actor. "I'll take happy tears all day," the actor said.

Holland 'Too Young' For Beer

LOS ANGELES: "Spider-Man: Homecoming" actor Tom Holland, 21, had to ask "Thor" star Chris Hemsworth to buy drinks on "Avengers: Infinity War" nights out.

"They were long days and we would go out for a couple of beers after filming ('Avengers...')," Hemsworth told dailystar.co.uk.

"When he is clean shaven,

bless him, Tom Holland looks about 12 and the bar didn't think he was old enough to grab a beer, so we had to get it for him. So while he might be an Avenger and he might help save the world, he doesn't look old enough."

Holland and Hemsworth star alongside actors including Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Pratt and Zoe Saldana.

Amber Rose Walks Naked Around Her Son

LOS ANGELES: Actress Amber Rose says she walks around naked in front of her five-year-old son Sebastian "all the time".

Rose said that parading around her young son while being naked is a part of her process to teach him about female empowerment. She aims to make him comfortable around and respect the female body despite his young age, reports usmagazine.com.

Rose said of Sebastian: "He's (growing) up to be a male feminist and respect women. I always have this dream where my son is in school and his friends are like, 'Man, she's a hoe' or 'What's up with these hoes?' And my son is gonna be like, 'You can't say that. Like, what?' Cause he's gonna be raised in a house with me, where

it's...just unheard of.

"Well he just turned five. But I do have, like, naked women all over my house."

Rose said that she has "pictures of vaginas" at her home.

"So, like, my son, he sees so much and I'm very free with my body," she added.

"I walk around naked around my son all the time. I don't (stop him when) he walks in a room, I don't go, 'Don't come in! Mommy's getting changed!'"

"I don't make it a bad thing where he's like, 'Oh, I'm sorry!' It's just like, 'Oh, my mom's naked. Who cares.' You know what I mean?" Rose said her son is already knowledgeable about female body parts compared to his friends.

A Scene From 'Traffik'



This image released by Codeblack Films shows Omar Epps, left, and Paula Patton in a scene from the thriller "Traffik." The film is about a group of friends and a biker gang out in the countryside. (Scott Everett White/Codeblack Films via AP)

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