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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Movie Box Office Is Exploding

Hollywood is getting off to a great start at the box office, when Jan through March is usually a dead zone. "300" has grossed \$125 million and could hit \$175 to \$200 million. John Travolta's "Wild Hogs" is over \$100 mil and should hit \$150 mil. Nicolas Cage's "Ghost Rider" cost a hefty \$120 mil, but for a movie they effectively dumped, it's going to make about \$125 million and went from an expected flop to a movie that will bring a profit. I'm not sure how the budget works out for "Norbit," but it is just a shade under \$100 mil. And "Bridge To Terabithia" is a definite word of mouth hit at \$75 mil for a no-stars family flick. "Music and Lyrics" is just at about \$50 mil, another movie that opened so-so but had good word of mouth and can now expect to be profitable thanks to a good run and presumably strong DVD sales. So, we've already got three \$100 mil+ hits, and break-out indie flick with "Terabithia" and a solid Eddie Murphy grosser. That's a lot of success stories so early in 2007.

It all reminds me of a story that slipped by while I was away. The head of the MPAA addressed ShoWest and banged the drum for how successful movies have been. Don't believe anyone who tells you movies are struggling because of some year-to-year comparison or rising budgets. It doesn't get simpler than this look at admissions:

The 1970s -- 980 million admissions average per year

The 1980s -- 1.1 billion admissions average per year

The 1990s -- 1.3 billion admissions average per year

The 2000s -- 1.5 billion admissions average per year

Did you catch that? Decade by decade, movie admissions have steadily increased, with the 2000s averaging 50% more tickets sold than in the 70s. How can anyone think movies are in trouble? Usually because they're stupid or compare one year to a previous year. Even if the previous year set all sorts of records, they think it's a disaster if the

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