Dynamics that Guide Movie Choices

A Look at the Top Ten Films of the 80's

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In Great Britain, one of the highest grossing films of the late 80's was the British-made science fiction thriller *Modavi Registrar*. In the United States, the choice was *Life of Kilarney*, a romantic comedy set in Boston. Both movies won international acclaim, yet neither film was a financial success outside its home country. Furthermore, on a list of the top ten movies of the 80's, neither film earned a spot. Success at home was not enough to overcome weaknesses in the international market.

The top-grossing movies of the 80's were films with appeal to audiences all over the world, regardless of differences in economics or social structure. In this paper, we'll look at some of those films, audience reactions to them, and possible reasons for their international success.

1.	Tracing the Life of Alvin	United States
2.	Three Families	France
3.	For Richer, For Richer	Australia
4.	Homecoming in the City	United States
5.	Learning to Love Ahman	Great Britain
6,	Writing Home	Italy
7.	Bad Company	France
8.	Running from the Law	Japan
9.	Hong Kong	Japan
10.	Let the Music Fly	United States

New Strategies for Marketing Internationally

Tracing the Life of Alvin was one of three highly successful fantasy/adventure films released by the United States film group Arstwhile, Inc. In a speech to the National Association of Motion Picture Producers, the film's executive producer, Sheryl Newhouse, said that "careful analysis of the market prior to filming and promotion planning helped to ensure success in very different parts of the world." Specifically, Newhouse said, "the film's producers made a conscious effort to market the piece differently in each of four regions: the western United States, the eastern United States, Europe, and Japan."[1]

For Richer, For Richer, the top-grossing film from Australia, was also marketed differently in different parts of the world. Its executive producer, Shelley Windsong, said that surveys conducted by researchers in the United States indicated that U.S. audiences would not be attracted by the marketing campaign used in Australia. "The cultural differences are too strong; U.S. audiences felt they wouldn't relate to a story about an Australian family as much as they would relate to a story about a farm family--location unspecified." In Australia, the film was marketed as an Australian film. In the United States, it was marketed as a family film about farmers. "In post screening interviews," Windsong notes, "audiences said that where the film took place didn't matter. But by then," she adds, "they'd been caught up in the story--its appeal really is universal."

The Exception

One film that wasn't marketed differently to different parts of the world was the Italian gem, *Writing Home*. The film, a low-budget first-effort by producer Maria Lopez, was shown first in small movie houses in Europe. Strong word-of-mouth convinced the American film company Cinemex to release the film in the

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United States. By the time it was released, says Cinemex Vice President Kate Pauli, "it was running so hard on its own, it almost didn't need marketing." *Writing Home* was also the first Italian film in more than 20 years to sweep every major award both at the Cahhn Film Festival and the European Arts Fest.

The Numbers

Paula Sanders, a renowned sociologist at Haverford University, says that more than 60 percent of the films now being released internationally are supported by marketing and promotion campaigns that are tailored to specific markets.[2]

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[1]"Thinking International" , a 1988 speech to the National Association of Film Producers, as excerpted from *Women in Film*, by David Darrow.

[2]"Speaking to the Globe," speech at the International Society of Film Sociologists, March 22, 1988