

Best film and television of 2018

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The film world in 2018 can be viewed and judged in different ways and by distinct standards.

"Global box office revenue for 2018 is expected to hit an all-time high of \$41.7 billion ... revenue looks to be up 2.7 percent over 2017, when combined worldwide ticket sales landed at a record \$40.6 billion," notes the *Hollywood Reporter*.

China continues to be a major contributor to this growth. According to government statistics, the country's box-office earnings in February, 10 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion), set a global monthly record. The Indian entertainment website, Showsha, notes the February 2018 figure was "a significant milestone in box-office history and comes at a time when China—the world's second-largest movie market—is inching towards its target of overtaking North America (the United States of America and Canada) as the world's largest film market by early 2019."

It was a relatively good year, after several very bad ones, in terms of North American box office revenue. That total is predicted to reach \$11.5 billion for the first time, on some 1.3 billion tickets sold, an increase from \$11.07 billion in 2017.

A number of large-budget films contributed to the financial success, including, according to *Variety*, "Disney's *Avengers: Infinity War*, Universal's *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, and Fox's *Deadpool 2*, as well as sleeper hits like Paramount's *A Quiet Place* and Warner Bros.' *A Star Is Born*." None of these, except perhaps the last, even deserves serious treatment.

The only movie in the top 10 "highest-grossing films of 2018" (the sole measuring stick that interests the American media these days) *not* a bloated superhero or comic book movie and such is *Bohemian Rhapsody*, the film biography of Queen lead vocalist Freddie Mercury.

Variety also pointed out that *Black Panther* (which the WSWS review noted, apart "from its racialist theme ... is nothing more than a conventional Hollywood 'blockbuster'") "was the big winner in North America, becoming one of three movies to ever hit \$700 million at

the domestic box office and the third-highest grossing film of all time in the States. The barrier-breaking film became the must-see cultural event at theaters, driving its global haul past \$1.3 billion. Is Oscar gold the next stop on Marvel's road to glory?"

The Geeks of Color website noted March 12 that the previous weekend "was a historical one at the box office for Ava DuVernay and Ryan Coogler. The two filmmakers took the top two spots at the weekend's box office with *Black Panther* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, marking the first time that African-American directors have held the number one and number two positions." That the two films were inconsequential at best and did not speak to the conditions and problems of wide layers of the African-American population or anyone else concerns no one in Hollywood or identity politics circles. We have recently commented on the spate of "women's films" and the generally unimpressive results on that score too.

Generally speaking, crassness and crudity prevail in the American commercial film industry. Things simply get worse and worse.

There were, nonetheless, some critical and observant films and television series made or released this year, including a number produced in Hollywood.

We present three lists.

1. Films and television series released or broadcast in 2018 in the US

- *The Young Karl Marx* (Raoul Peck)
- *Vice* (Adam McKay)
- *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón)
- *Isle of Dogs* (Wes Anderson)
- *Capernaum* (Nadine Labaki)
- *Icebox* (Daniel Sawka)
- *At Eternity's Gate* (Julian Schnabel)
- *Wildlife* (Paul Dano)
- *Green Book* (Peter Farrelly)
- *A Season in France* (Mahamat-Saleh Haroun)
- *Sweet Country* (Warwick Thornton)
- *The Workshop* (Laurent Cantet)
- *No Date, No Signature* (Vahid Jalilvand)

- *Submission* (Richard Levine)
- *The Rider* (Chloé Zhao)
- *1945* (Ferenc Török) [Actually a 2017 release in the US, but in many theaters only in 2018]*

* With various reservations, but a film that had some memorable sequences: *Phantom Thread* (Paul Thomas Anderson)

Television series:

- *Homecoming* (Sam Esmail)
- *Succession* (created by Jesse Armstrong)

2. Films viewed at festivals this year and not yet released in the US

- *Peterloo* (Mike Leigh, UK)
- *Screwdriver* (Bassam Jarbawi, Palestine)
- *Twin Flower* (Laura Luchetti, Italy)
- *I Am Not a Witch* (Rungano Nyoni, Zambia)
- *The Load* (Ognjen Glavonic, Serbia)
- *The Public* (Emilio Estevez, US)
- *Styx* (Wolfgang Fischer, Austria)
- *Ash is the Purest White* (Jia Zhangke, China)

3. Documentary films and television productions

- *Central Airport THF* (Karim Aïnouz)
- *The Waldheim Waltz* (Ruth Beckermann)
- *Maria by Callas* (Tom Volf)
- *Garry Winogrand: All Things Are Photographable*

(Sasha Waters Freyer)

- *Hal* (Amy Scott)
- *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (Morgan Neville)
- *Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.* (Stephen Loveridge)
- *In Exile: A Family Film* (Juan Francisco Urrusti)

Television:

- *The Innocent Man* (Clay Tweel)
- *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story* (Alexandra Dean)

[Broadcast on PBS in May 2018]

- *Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind* (Marina Zenovich) [Broadcast on HBO in July 2018]

- *They'll Love Me When I'm Dead* (Morgan Neville)

[Released in November 2018 on Netflix]



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