Cultural Daily
Independent Voices, New Perspectives

# Cultural Weekly's 2011 SUNDANCE SCORECARD

Adam Leipzig · Thursday, January 12th, 2012

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Welcome back to the empty slopes, the full theatres, the late-night parties, the later-night deals, the hopes dashed, the careers made, the swag, the stars, the Fast Passes. It's almost Sundance time again.

If you're going to Sundance this year to buy movies or sell them, to see them or to party with their makers, you're in full preparation mode right now, getting together your "Top Secret" playbook. Your plane to Park City leaves in a few days, so you can set up your condo, make sure the Internet's working, and lay in enough food (and assistants to cook it).

If you're sitting at the 50-yard line and watching this year, as I am, you can appreciate it as an action sport.

**Post-game analysis**

In preparation for this year's Super Bowl of Dealmaking, let's take a look at how everyone did last year.

Sundance titles are not a true bell-weather of the indie film business, but they are a temperature check. The top-grossing indie film for 2011 was Woody Allen's charming *Midnight in Paris* – it made $56 million and it wasn't at Sundance.

Sundance's top-grossing title for 2011 couldn't crack the Top 100: *Our Idiot Brother* grossed $25 million to snag 113th place, and given its marketing cost, it is not in the black. Lagging behind it were Sundance's silver and bronze-medal finishers: *The Guard* ($5.3 million gross) and *Margin Call* ($5.2 million gross), capturing 164th and 166th places respectively. Every other picture made less, often far less…. in some cases, only a few thousand dollars. In a few cases, a movie that was sold didn't get released at all.

Yet the biggest result from Cultural Weekly's 2011 Sundance Scorecard is that box office gross doesn't tell the whole story, especially with indie films. In 2011, according to Roadside Attractions president Howard Cohen, "the indie business began to stabilize." Distributors were able to rely more and more on non-theatrical revenue streams, such as VOD, advertising supported platforms like YouTube and Hulu, and subscription outlets like Netflix and Hulu Plus.

(More on what's ahead for the 2012 season next week.)

**MVP**

If even the highest-grossing 2011 Sundance film lost money, were there any winners? Yes, audience-specific ones – movies that burrowed deep down into their niche markets. The standout was Sundance Select's *Buck*, which grossed more than $4 million. The film was bought for $700,000 and is doing great in its after-theatre life.

**Play by play**

Over the past months, I have assembled this Scorecard based on what happened to last year's

movies. My sources are varied. Some are publicly-available databases and reporting that was published in Deadline.com, Indiewire, and the trades. I gratefully acknowledge their diligent work. I have also turned to my confidential, inside-the-industry sources – particularly on acquisition prices, many of which are being revealed here for the first time. These figures are often held in strict confidence. People routinely lie about these numbers – distributors usually say they paid less than they did, so they look savvy; sales agents often claim a higher figure, so they look aggressive. I have tried to sift it all for you, and get more than one source where I could. If any of this information is incorrect, please email me at adam@culturalweekly.com and I will update this article.

**Cultural Weekly's 2011 Sundance Scorecard**

*Note: Box office grosses are for the calendar year 2011. Jump to the bottom for a* ***Legend*** *for the football-uninitiated or if you're not too-inside the indie movie world.*

**Sony Pictures Classics**

*The Guard*. Bought for $1,000,000; released July 29; 203 screens at widest release. $5,325,090 box office gross. *Touchdown and a conversion!*

*Take Shelter*. Bought for $1,000,000; released September 30; 91 screens at widest release. $1,630,433 box office gross. *Still in play – at least a field goal.*

*The Greatest Movie Ever Sold.* Bought for $1,000,000; released April 22; 141 screens at widest release. $638,476 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

*Higher Ground.* Bought for Est. $250,000 + P&A commitment; released August 26; 81 screens at widest release. $836,503 box office gross. *Gained a few yards, especially as they get to play some post-season games in international territories.*

**The Weinstein Company**

*Our Idiot Brother*. Bought for $6,000,000 + $15,000,000 P&A commitment; released August 26; 2,555 screens at widest release. $24,814,830 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

*The Details*. Bought for $7,500,000 + $10,000,000 P&A commitment; not released.*What's the game here?*

**Fox Searchlight**

*Martha Marcy May Marlene.* Bought for $2,000,000; released October 21; 183 screens at widest release. $2,900,625 box office gross. *First down.*

*Another Earth.* Bought for est. $1,000,000; released July 22; 94 screens at widest release. $1,321,194 box office gross. *First down.*

*The Art of Getting By.* Bought for $4 million; released June 17; 610 screens at widest release. $1,430,241 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

*The Bengali Detective.* Bought for remake rights; aired on HBO. *Could be a good pass downfield – time will tell.*

*Sound of My Voice.* Bought for low-six figures, for all English-speaking territories. Release date April 27, 2012. *Call this a likely first down, as part of a relationship play with the highly talented Brit Marling.*

**Focus Features**

*Pariah.* Bought for under $1,000,000; released December 28; 4 screens at widest release. $81,400 box office gross through December 31, 2011. *Next season's game.*

**Roadside Attractions**

*Margin Call.* Bought for $1,050,000; released October 21; 199 screens at widest release, day-and-date with VOD. $5,185,778 box office gross, and strong VOD numbers. (The film could have expanded to more screens, but was restricted from doing so by the larger theatre chains because of the simultaneous VOD release.) *Touchdown and a conversion!*

*The Future.* Bought for $250,000; released July 29; 31screens at widest release. $568,662 box

office gross. *First down.*

*Project Nim.* Est. (HBO) bought for $2 million; released July 8; 22 screens at widest release. $411,184.00 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

**Lionsgate**

*The Devil's Double.* Bought for est. $4,000,000; released July 29; 89 screens at widest release. $1,361,512 box office gross. *Fumble.*

**Participant Media**

*Circumstance.* Bought for under $500,000; released August 26; 31 screens at widest release. Roadside Attractions distributed on a fee-for-services basis. $454,121 box office gross. *First down for Roadside; incomplete pass for Participant.*

*Page One: Inside the New York Times.* Bought for $500,000; released June 17; 65 screens at widest release. Magnolia distributed on a fee-for-services basis. $1,067,028 box office gross. *First down for Magnolia, but not for Participant.*

**Paramount**

*Like Crazy*. Bought for $4,000,000 + $10,000,000 P&A commitment; released October 28; 162 screens at widest release. $3,344,000 box office gross. *Sacking the quarterback.*

**Magnolia**

*Magic Trip*. Bought for less than $500,000; released August 5; 18 screens at widest release. $154,521 box office gross, and did very well on VOD. *Touchdown!*

*I Melt With You.* Bought for less than $500,000; released on VOD November 11 and theatrically December 9; 2 screens at widest release. $6,400 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

*Hobo With a Shotgun.* Bought for less than $500,000 before Sundance; released May 6. $703,002 box office gross; $1,896,985 in domestic DVD sales. *Touchdown and a conversion!*

**IFC**

*Perfect Sense.* Bought for under $1,000,000; to be released February 10, 2012. *Next season's game.*

*The Ledge.* Bought for $1,000,000; released July 8; 2 screens at widest release. $7,140 box office gross. *Even with VOD, no yards gained.*

*Salvation Boulevard.* Bought for Est. $500,000; released July 15; 4 screens at widest release. $28,468 box office gross. *Even with VOD, no yards gained.*

**Sundance Selects**

*Buck.* Bought for $700,000; released June 17; 151 screens at widest release. $4,038,912 box office gross. *Touchdown and a conversion!*

*These Amazing Shadows.* Est. $50,000-$100,000; released April 21; 2 screens at widest release. Negligible box office gross. *Lost yardage on the theatrical field, but VOD plays in a different stadium.*

*Mad Bastards.* Est. $50,000-$100,000; on demand January 22, 2012. *Next season's game.*

*Septien.* Est. $50,000-$100,000; released July 26. Negligible box office gross. *Lost yardage on the theatrical field, but VOD plays in a different stadium.*

*Uncle Kent.* Purchase price not available, although some sources estimate as high as $500,000; VOD only. *Hard play to call.*

**Oscilloscope**

*Meek's Cut Off.* Bought for est. $250,000; released April 8; 45 screens at widest release. $977,772 box office gross. *Field goal!*

*Bellflower.* Bought for est. $100,000; released August 5; 13 screens at widest release. $168,226 box office gross. *First down.*

**Anchor Bay**

*Son of No One*. Bought for est. $2,000,000; released November 4. $30,680 box office gross. *Fumble.*

**Liddell Entertainment**

*Silent House.* Bought for $3,000,000 + $3,000,000 P&A commitment; to be released March 9, 2012. *Next season's game.*

**Motion Picture Group**

*Gun Hill Road.* Bought for $1,000,000; released August 5; 10 screens at widest release. $148,994 box office gross. *Fumble.*

**HBO**

*Hot Coffee.* Bought for Est. $200,000; Not released. *1st down for HBO subscribers.*

*Knuckle.* Bought for remake rights; released December 9; 3 screens at widest release. $2,647 box office gross. *Long pass downfield – remake is a good play.*

**National Geographic Films**

*Life in a Day.* No minimum guarantee, and Nat Geo got distribution fees only; released July 24; 19 screens at widest release. $252,788 box office gross. *No yards gained. Nat Geo closed its film division last month: Franchise abandoned.*

**Smodcast Pictures**

*Red State.* Self-distributed; released March 11; 2 screens at widest release. $1,065,429 box office gross. *Kevin's Smith budget was $4 million, so his investors get a Penalty Kick.*

**Producers Distributors Agency**

*Senna*. Bought for $0 (income split with distributor); released August 12; 47 screens at widest release. $1,612,430 box office gross. *Field goal!*

**Dada Films**

*The Last Mountain.* Bought for $300,000; released June 3; 7 screens at widest release. $122,959 box office gross. *Incomplete pass.*

**New Video**

*The Flaw*. Bought for Est. $25,000; not released. *Not sure this is football.*

**Oprah Winfrey Network**

*Crime after Crime.* Bought for est. $50,000; released July 1; 1 screen at widest release. $21,141 box office gross. *Not sure this is football.*

*Becoming Chaz.* Bought for est. $50,000; OWN premiere. *Not sure this is football.*

**A&E Indiefilms**

*Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel.* Released December 16; 2 screens at widest release. $3,050 box office gross. *Blocked pass.*

**LEGEND**

*Field goal! = Profitable*

*Touchdown! = Profitable+*

*Touchdown and a conversion! = Profitable++*

*First down = Did well enough in theatrical run to gain yardage, and continue to play into ancillaries, like VOD*

*Pass downfield = Bought for other reasons, like remake rights*

*Incomplete pass = Perhaps it could have worked, but the audience didn't catch the ball*

*No yards gained = Distributor probably covered its costs, but that doesn't do much good, does it?*

*Fumble = Lost money*

*Sacking the quarterback = Lost so much money you're tasting dirt*

*Next season's game = Movie wasn't released in 2011 (or was only released in the last few days of*

*December), so its game will be played in 2012*
*Not really football = Bought for other reasons, like cable broadcast*
*Thanks to Cultural Weekly reader and indie filmmaker Thomas Woodrow for suggesting we add this Legend for better clarity!*
*Images, from top: Buck, The Guard, Our Idiot Brother, Margin Call, Meek's Cut Off.*

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