

'Wrath' is joy to weekend box office

The Jason Statham thriller "Wrath of Man" was box-office champ in its debut weekend.

The movie, directed by Guy Ritchie, made \$8.1 million at North American theaters between Friday and Sunday, according to Variety.

That haul beat the anime movie "Demon Slayer," which drew \$3 million over the weekend, and the video game adaptation "Mortal Kombat," which grossed \$2.3 million at domestic cinemas. Both were in their third weekends in theaters.

"Wrath of Man" stars Statham as a security guard for a cash truck who boasts a mysterious skill set.

It's the latest collaboration between the actor and Ritchie, who worked together on "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels" and "Snatch."

"Wrath of Man" has made an additional \$17.6 million internationally.

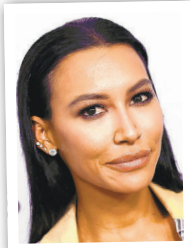
With its latest weekend total, "Demon Slayer" is up to \$39 million at North American theaters. The Japanese film has grossed more than \$400 million worldwide after being released in Asia last year. It led the domestic box office last weekend, earning \$6.4 million.

Peter Sblendorio

Sweet message on Mother's Day

Naya Rivera's widower, actor Ryan Dorsey, honored the late "Glee" star with a sweet message on the first Mother's Day since she drowned last summer while rescuing their young son.

"We can't say the word happy but we'll say thank you for being a mother & giving me this sweet amazing boy," the "Big Sky" actor wrote on Instagram with a photo of a smiling Rivera and 5-year-old Josey at a restaurant.



Rivera (left), 33, who starred on "Glee" for six years as cheerleader Santana Lopez, drowned at Lake Piru, near Santa Clarita, Calif., in July. Officials believe

she rescued Josey from the water, but was unable to pull herself to safety in time.

In late January, Dorsey praised his son, posting a sweet photo of him decked out in Carolina Panthers gear, using the NFL team's slogan.

"At such a young age, he's endured more than anyone should at 5 years old. Without even fully realizing it, he lives the #keep pounding mantra every day with his (resilience)," Dorsey tweeted. "You're so strong, so brave, and so kind. I will always be proud of you."

Kate Feldman

'STREET' VIEW

'Maria' on urban origins of enduring kids show



Sonia Manzano now (left) and as Maria (above) in the 1990s. She retired after starring on "Sesame Street" for 44 years. Below, Manzano with The Count, Abby Cadabby and Grover at "Sesame" 50th anniversary benefit gala in 2019.

BY JAMI GANZ
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Long before "Sesame Street" premiered, Sonia Manzano lived there — minus the Muppets.

Manzano spent 44 years on the beloved children's show as Maria, joining two years after its 1969 premiere that showed a place she knew well but TV audiences did not.

"What hooked me on 'Sesame Street' was that it was set in this urban environment that looked like the Bronx neighborhood that I was kind of raised in," she said. "Up until that time, you never saw a city in a kids show. And what was called then an inner city, you certainly never saw any of that. ... And I was charmed that there were people of color for the first time on television."

Manzano still cherishes her time on the show, the subject of a new documentary film, "Street Gang: How We Got to Sesame Street," available now on video on demand.

"I am so thrilled that [director Marilyn Agrelo] has touched on an aspect of the show that isn't often touched upon, and that's the artistry of the show and how all of these creative people just crashed together in 1969, propelled by the civil rights movement, propelled by what was going on in the country socially," Manzano, 70, told the Daily News.



"It was a big explosion, like the Beatles, where all of the sudden they changed the landscape of artistry and how we absorb information."

The series premiered with the intent to provide educational programming for children in low-income communities. But unlike other children's shows, "Sesame Street" didn't talk down to its viewers and instead educated them on real-world issues, including racism and death.

Manzano came onboard in 1971, with the character of Maria, meant to mirror the actress in personality and milestones.

"I think ... a reason the show has

been on the air so long is that they allowed the cast members to age, No. 1," said Manzano, author of several books including the memoir "Becoming Maria" in 2015. "I was a feminist, I fell in love, I got married, I had a baby."

The other key factor, she said, was that the show — and in particular, writer and director Jon Stone, who helped create the series along with Big Bird, Cookie Monster and Oscar the Grouch — sought out real people.

"I was nervous about that at first," recalled Manzano, who retired from "Sesame Street" in 2015. "It's easier to play a character. And

I kept saying, 'What's Maria like?' And they kept saying, 'No, we just want you to be yourself. ... So really, Maria is me on purpose.'

When it came to communicating with viewers, though, Manzano dug into what she sought out as a kid.

"I tried to remember how I used to watch television looking for comfort," she said, adding that some "Sesame Street" viewers would also be "looking for order and comfort and I'm gonna give it to them."

Though "Sesame Street" was "in the adult consciousness immediately," Manzano said, it wasn't until the 1980s that the show's impact truly hit home for the actress as she became a wife and mother. Maria's parallel wedding and motherhood, she said, proved audiences "were involved and invested in the lives of the humans" on the show.

Of course, just as "Sesame Street" drew from its real-life players, it also took and still takes its cues "from what's going on in our society," said Manzano, who hopes this, along with the artistry, hits home for "Street Gang" viewers.

"This is a creative expression that came out of the political turmoil that was in the '60s. And I hope that whatever expressions people are coming up with now, in 2021, that they realize ... an artistic avenue will get you further," Manzano said. "And throw in a few jokes; that always helps, too."