

DAMSON IDRIS as Joshua Pearce and BRAD PITT as Sonny Hayes in Apple Original Films' "F1"

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Will 'F1' Finally Give Apple a Box Office Hit?

The tech company's foray into the box office has been largely lackluster, but Brad Pitt and Lewis Hamilton's racing drama could change that



Jeremy Fuster June 23, 2025 @ 6:10 AM

Apple Original Films' recent foray into movie theaters has mostly brought lackluster number at the box office, and its future is very murky. But the Silicon Valley studio may finally have its first bona-fide big-screen hit with "F1," the Brad Pitt racing drama from "Top Gun: Maverick" director Joseph Kosinski and producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Lewis Hamilton.

With annual revenues of $390 billion, Apple is willing and able to spend big on projects that Hollywood's legacy studios wouldn't touch, as evidenced by the $150 million-plus budgets granted to titles like Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Ridley Scott's "Napoleon." With "F1," the bar has been raised even further.

Sporting a net budget of at least $200 million, “F1” is a film as globe-trotting as the racing circuit whose name it bears. Kosinski, Pitt and their film crew traveled the world with Formula One, filming races in locales like Las Vegas, Abu Dhabi, Silverstone, and Monza just to name a few. Special cameras were mounted on the F1 drivers’ cars to take footage during actual races, and while the teams were off the track, Pitt and co-star Damson Idris climbed into modified Formula 2 cars during the race weekends to shoot primary footage.

“Historically, racing dramas like ‘Grand Prix,’ ‘Rush,’ ‘Le Mans,’ haven’t done that well at the box office. ‘Ford v Ferrari’ was one notable exception,” said Comscore analyst Paul Dergarabedian. “But ‘F1’ sits alone on a mountaintop in terms of the commercial factor in terms of the talent involved and the sheer level of spectacle being offered.”

Tax rebates and at least $40 million in sponsorship revenue from companies like Expensify and carmakers like Mercedes-Benz helped foot the bill, according to Sports Business Journal. But “F1” is still a risky title given that it will be soon up against established summer blockbuster franchise films like “Jurassic World: Rebirth,” “Superman” and “The Fantastic Four: First Steps,” with the latter two currently projected for $100 million-plus opening weekends.

The presence of “F1” at F1 has been so constant over the past two years that it has become a must-see for many of its fans around the world. That is reflected in the tracking, which has increased to $50 million domestically with two theatrical sources telling TheWrap they predict an opening weekend closer to $60 million thanks to the film’s strong reviews, which have given it an 88% score on Rotten Tomatoes.



Jerry Bruckheimer on the set of Apple Original Films’ “F1 The Movie”

That's why Apple is spending hard on marketing for "F1," running TV spots during the NBA Finals and Formula One broadcasts like last week's Canadian Grand Prix. The studio has also worked alongside Formula One's owners, Liberty Media, to market the film to hardcore racing fans even as it was being filmed. The movie's fictional racing team, APX GP, got a full-scale presence at races, including their own spot in the paddock and selling merch for the team that has been worn by fans in the bleachers.

That buzz from the hardcore fans will be critical to drawing in a wider American audience over July 4 weekend and beyond. Also helping "F1" will be continued Imax support through its first two weeks of play, as "Jurassic World: Rebirth" will open on other premium formats like Dolby and ScreenX.

If "F1" can keep its second weekend hold strong, that will be a good omen that it is holding up as an alternative for moviegoers who want a blockbuster that doesn't involve superheroes like Superman or the Human Torch, putting it on track for a $200 million-plus domestic run.

"'F1' could do for Formula One what 'Top Gun' did for Navy's recruitment," quipped Dergarabedian, nodding to Kosinski and Bruckheimer's success with "Top Gun: Maverick."

And of course, "F1" can expect strong overseas turnout, particularly in Europe where Formula One is appointment television every weekend for millions. Pitt has worked hard to promote the film with a Tom Cruise-esque global press tour, increasing the film's chances of a $500 million-plus global run that would be more than double the $221 million global total of Ridley Scott's "Napoleon," which stands as Apple's highest grossing theatrical release thus far.

But even if Apple finally makes its mark on the box office, it is difficult to see what their next move will be. Apple has a long history of being very opaque on its long-term moves for its core tech ventures, and that has extended to a media division that is relatively minuscule in its portfolio as the company does not disclose its Apple TV+ subscribers or how much of its entertainment revenue comes from film and television compared to other sectors like Apple Music and Apple Arcade.

It's the polar opposite of the one other Hollywood company that could be reasonably compared to Apple: Amazon. Since acquiring MGM, Amazon has made its commitment to theatrical very clear, using the legacy studio's distribution infrastructure to develop a full theatrical slate that will launch in earnest next year with at least 14 theatrical releases.

Apple, meanwhile, has yet to throw its hat into Hollywood's M&A game, which means that it has turned to legacy studios like Warner Bros., which is handling "F1," to oversee theatrical distribution while it covers production and marketing. With the exception

of Disney, Apple has teamed with every major studio on a distribution deal at least once, with Sony handling “Napoleon” and “Fly Me to the Moon,” Paramount handling Martin Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon” and Universal taking Matthew Vaughn’s “Argylle.”

But so far, the results have not been impressive aside from the $158 million global total of “Killers of the Flower Moon” — a feat given that it was a 3.5-hour film about the murders of Native Americans for the oil on their land. Prior to “F1,” the most commercially accessible Apple film was the Bryce Dallas Howard spy romp “Argylle,” which was a $200 million bomb with just $96.8 million grossed worldwide.

Six months after “Argylle” was released, Apple abruptly abandoned plans for a full theatrical release for “Wolfs,” an action comedy starring Pitt and George Clooney, just six weeks before it was set to hit theaters.

Instead, “Wolfs” got a one-week run in theaters before hitting streaming, prompting director Jon Watts to cancel plans for a previously announced sequel. Earlier this year, another Apple film, the adventure movie “Fountain of Youth,” skipped theaters and headed straight to streaming.

After “F1,” the only Apple title with a theatrical release on the calendar ahead is Spike Lee’s “Highest 2 Lowest,” which will only get a two-week theatrical window courtesy of A24 this August before hitting Apple TV+ on Sept. 5.

Insiders at three studios have told TheWrap that Apple has not reached out to them so far this year about distributing its upcoming films, which include the Ryan Reynolds action-adventure film “Mayday,” Paul Greengrass’ wildfire film “The Lost Bus,” and an untitled animated film based on the “Peanuts” comic strips. Even if those movies do hit theaters, it is unclear whether they will get a full theatrical window like “F1” or a curtailed one like “Highest 2 Lowest.” TheWrap has reached out to Apple for comment.

Whether “F1” marks a turning point or one final theatrical hurrah before pivoting to streaming-only releases, Apple is showing theaters what it can do when it produces and sells a movie truly meant for the big screen, and that’s the sort of Silicon Valley influence that Hollywood and exhibitors will welcome.