

'White Men' lands on its feet

By David Kronke
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"White Men Can't Jump" leaped to the top of the nation's box office in its opening weekend. Ron Shelton's acclaimed comedy about street basketball, starring Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson, scored \$14.7 million, for an average of \$7,460 per screen.

Meanwhile, the controversial erotic mystery "Basic Instinct" remained strong, with a \$13.2 million take, a drop of only 13 per-

cent from last week. In 10 days, the Michael Douglas-Sharon Stone thriller — which aroused the ire of gay-rights groups because of its depiction of lesbian and bisexual characters — has grossed \$34.7 million.

Many felt that "Basic Instinct's" second weekend was crucial to its success. "It's got material that makes it a hit — the sex and the mystery — no matter what the critics say," observed John Krier, president of Exhibitor Relations.

Outside of "White Men," other

movies making their opening bows fared modestly. The Rodney Dangerfield vehicle "Ladybugs" came in fifth with \$5.1 million, averaging \$3,390 per screen. "The Cutting Edge," a romantic comedy about a bickering Olympic figure-skating team, earned \$4.5 million at 775 theaters, averaging a respectable \$5,779 at each, for sixth place.

In a limited release, the anti-Apartheid drama "The Power of One" earned \$684,358, for a \$4,786 per-screen average. And moviegoers gunned down "Ruby" — the conspiracy drama grossed a mere \$614,327 for a paltry \$804 average per theater.

The comedies "Wayne's World" and "My Cousin Vinny" continued their winning ways, coming in third and fourth place, respectively. "Wayne's World" added \$5.7 million to its earnings, which total \$87.1 million to date. "Vinny" took in \$5.3 million, for a complete box-office take of \$25.1 million.

Among Oscar nominees, only "Beauty and the Beast" and "Fried Green Tomatoes" remained in the nation's top 10. "Beauty" earned \$1.7 million and

landed in ninth place, for a total of \$125.3 million. "Tomatoes" came in seventh with \$2.8 million. It has taken in \$65.3 million to date.

Although big winners at the Academy Awards can enjoy

boosts at the box office, Krier said that pattern may not repeat itself this year. "An Oscar win can add \$10 million to \$20 million to a film's grosses," he said. "But most of the nominees are pretty well played out."