

# Russian Box Office Submits to 'Fifty Shades of Grey'

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Sex sells, as the adage goes, and box office sales in Russia this February were a case in point.

Despite a looming economic recession and falling real wages, movie ticket sales surged to a five-year monthly high with the release of BDSM romance "Fifty Shades of Grey" on Feb. 13.

Nearly 17 million people went to Russian movie theaters, the highest February turnout in five years and an increase of 18 percent from 2014, according to independent research company Movie Research.

Four million of those viewers, or nearly 25 percent of the total, went to see "Fifty Shades of Grey." The erotic romance, which earned an R rating in the United States and was banned from theaters in India, earned a total of about 1.1 billion rubles (\$18 million) in Russia

in February.

Based on the self-published novel of the same title, "Fifty Shades of Grey" has proved itself a veritable box office smash, earning \$162 million in the United States and \$547 million worldwide as of March 17, according to ticket sale reporting service Box Office Mojo.

In Russia, the movie tipped the box office scales firmly towards foreign films. The audience for foreign movies grew by close to 54 percent compared to 2014, to nearly 14 million viewers, while the audience for domestic films shrank year-on-year to 3 million viewers.

Russian films staged a comeback late in the month, however, with the release of World War I epic "Battalion," also named "Battalion of Death," on Feb. 20. The tale of a group of female soldiers raced ahead of "Fifty Shades" at the end of the month with nearly a million viewers in one week.

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