



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on April 2, 2019

Unplanned Pulls In \$6.1M on Opening Weekend. R Rating, Nets' Ad-Buy Refusal Fails To Kill It

The attempt to kill box-office returns for [Unplanned](#), the film that details a Planned Parenthood clinic director's change of heart, has failed.

Despite the [refusal of networks to broadcast advertisements](#) and [last-minute attack from Twitter](#), the film doubled its anticipated take of \$3 million, and took fifth place among its competitors on opening weekend, [according to The Hollywood Reporter](#).



The smash debut for a Christian film is particularly unusual, *THR* noted, but as well particularly gratifying for its distributor and producers.

\$6.1 Million Opening

Unplanned tells the story of Abby Johnson, who rose from being a volunteer at Planned Parenthood to becoming its youngest clinic director ever. PP performed 332,757 abortions in the fiscal year that ended in June, or 991 every day of the year as the Family Research Council has noted.

But then Johnson witnessed an abortion at 13 weeks gestation on ultrasound, which inspired her to quit her job and become a pro-life activist. "The baby looked as if it were being wrung like a dishcloth, twirled and squeezed," [she wrote](#). "And then it crumpled and began disappearing into the cannula before my eyes. The last thing I saw was the tiny, perfectly formed backbone sucked into the tube, and then it was gone."

Johnson eventually became a Catholic and wrote her memoir, [Unplanned](#), which became the film. The usual suspects did their best to sink it. The Motion Picture Association of American rated it "R" because it dealt with abortion, and major television networks refused to broadcast ads for the same reason. The film was too controversial, they said.

Still, [THR reported](#), "the R-rated pic scored the second-best start ever for faith-based distributor Pure Flix; tracking had suggested it would earn only around \$3 million. "Graced with a coveted A+ CinemaScore, the controversial anti-abortion drama Unplanned opened to a strong \$6.1 million from 1,059 theaters at the U.S. box office despite a relatively modest footprint."

The film was the fifth most popular in theaters when it opened over the weekend, and "scored the second-biggest start ever for faith-based distributor Pure Flix behind God's Not Dead 2 (\$7.6 million)," *THR* reported. "The Christian pic did its biggest business in the Midwest and South."

As well, the film's popularity in flyover country knocked theaters on the coasts out of the list of top 20 grossing theaters, [THR reported](#):

Generally, theaters in New York City and Los Angeles populate the list of a film's top 20 grossing theaters. In this case, there were none. Instead, the top theater was the AMC Northpark 15 in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, followed by cinemas in St. Louis; Detroit; Wichita, Kansas; Temecula in



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Southern California's Riverside County; Salt Lake City; Orange County, California; Kansas City; Odessa, Texas; and Nashville.

Blocking Effort Failed

But, as [THR reported](#), *Unplanned's* producers said the film "didn't have an easy road to the big screen. A number of TV networks declined to play ads for the movie, while the film's Twitter account was briefly suspended Saturday morning."

The concerted effort to hide and kill the movie by stopping advertising failed. Among the networks that refused advertising, [THR disclosed](#) last week, were Lifetime, which told marketers it declined ads because of the "sensitive nature of the film." Yet Lifetime "previously promoted an interview with Scarlett Johansson where she pitches Planned Parenthood."

Other anti-*Unplanned* movers and shakers were the Hallmark Channel and USA network, the latter a subsidiary of NBCUniversal, along with the Travel and Cooking channels, HGTV, and the Food Network — all subsidiaries of Discovery. Again, the film's "sensitive nature," the Discovery-owned channels said, was the problem.

Despite the leftist attempt to sink the film, it sailed ahead with fair winds and following seas. One sign beyond the \$6.1 million weekend haul? Views of its trailer, which went from 250,000 on Friday to 1.7 million by Saturday morning, *THR* reported.

One happy viewer, *THR* noted, was Vice President Mike Pence:

"So good to see movie theaters across the country showing @UnplannedMovie — a deeply inspiring new pro-life film based on the best-selling book by @AbbyJohnson," [he tweeted](#). "More & more Americans are embracing the sanctity of life because of powerful stories like this one. #Unplanned."

This weekend, the film will be in 1,700 theaters, up from 1,000 on opening weekend.



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