

'Soul Surfer' Big Hit at Box Office

Soul Surfer—the inspirational life story of surfer Bethany Hamilton, the Christian teen who had her left arm bitten off by a tiger shark—took fourth place in its debut weekend, grossing an estimated \$11.1 million from 2,214 theaters, according to .

Heavily marketed to the faith-based community, the movie—distributed by Sony Pictures' TriStar label and marketed by the studio's faith-based division Affirm Films and FilmDistrict—was made for \$18 million.

"Audiences seemed enamored with *Soul Surfer*, giving it a rare A-plus," said the *Los Angeles Times*, referencing CinemaScore's moviegoer polling. "That means the film is off to a solid start, especially considering the teenage girls who propelled it to success are on spring break over the next few weeks."

The family film—which stars AnnaSophia Robb as Bethany; Dennis Quaid as her father, Tom; Helen Hunt as Bethany's mother, Cheri; and Carrie Underwood as church youth leader Sarah Hill—beat projections by \$1 million for its theatrical debut, *USA Today* reported.

Soul Surfer earned recommendations from more than half of the nation's film critics, according to . The Orlando Sentinel noted that the film is "the best faith-based film ever made ... uplifting, entertaining and wonderfully acted."

Rated PG for an intense accident sequence and some thematic material, the film is based on Bethany's *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board* (MTV Books), which was sold in some Christian bookstores.

Have you seen Soul Surfer? What did you think?