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Cannes: Despite a Slew of Announcements, This Market is Slimmer



John Hopewell | May 13, 2014 | 01:08PM PT

Going into this year's Cannes, the consensus is that, rather than too many projects, there may well be too few despite the flurry of down-to-the-wire high-profile announcements on the eve of the festival.

But less product has its upsides.

"What we have is a less-cluttered marketplace with better-quality movies on the whole and that is healthy," IM Global's Stuart Ford said.

Voltage Pictures topper Nicolas Chartier agreed. "Less product than usual, less competition, so if you have real movies with cast/director and start date, it's great," he said.

Announced on the eve of the opening night were blue ribbon projects such as Joe Miale's alien invasion thriller "Prisoner of War" and teen comedy "Good Kids," from Voltage; Terrence Malick's "Voyage of Time," which Wild Bunch is selling; Annapurna Intl.'s "American Express," with Charlize Theron; IM Global's Jackie Chan action thriller "Civilian," Jonas Cuaron's "Forsaken," with Gael

Garcia Bernal; Billy Ray's remake of Oscar-winning "The Secret in Their Eyes," with Chiwetel Ejiofor and Gwyneth Paltrow; and the Exchange's "Kickboxer" reboot.

But flurry or no flurry, many bizzers concluded that the 2014 Cannes trading looks to be anemic compared to 2013. Last year, buyers were overwhelmed by high-profile cast movie projects, very often U.S., very often only semi-packaged. Many never got made.

"One of the things that's been building for about a year now, but that is now really coming into focus for people, is that there is a genuine lack of content coming onto the markets," FilmNation's Glen Basner said.

Imagem's Ivan Boeing said in 2013, some projects materialized at the last moment, while others were not fully packaged. But this year, "Cannes looks set to be smaller with business focused on 10, maximum 20 bigger projects."

For mainstream buyers, a clutch of must-check-out titles are indeed coming into focus.

Voltage hits Cannes with Eli Roth's latest, erotic psycho-thriller "Knock, Knock," with Keanu Reeves. Kristen Stewart and Nicholas Hoult star in "Equals," a futuristic love story from Mister Smith, with Ridley Scott among the producers. FilmNation arrived with an Amy Adams sci-fi thriller, "Story of Your Life," from Denis Villeneuve.

Mel Gibson will star in Jean-Francois Richet's action thriller "Blood Father" for Wild Bunch, which is presenting "Spring Breakers: The Second Coming" and Mark Osborne's animated "The Little Prince."

Tom Hardy plays Ronnie and Reggie Kray in Brian Helgeland's "Legend," sold by Studiocanal; Colin Firth co-stars in drone mission thriller "Eye in the Sky" from eOne Intl.

Lionsgate Intl. will introduce a star-driven triptych: Villeneuve's Mexican drug lord hunt "Sicario," with Benicio del Toro and Emily Blunt; "The Last Face," starring Charlize Theron and Javier Bardem; Juan Antonio Bayona's "A Monster Calls" with Liam Neeson.

But the verdict remains: "There's always room for one or two surprise pictures. But I don't think there's going to be a huge amount of big movies happening," said Constantin's Martin Moszkowicz.

Added Basner: "If there is one overarching theme that we need to address in our market that is: How are we going to continue to bring a consistent supply of quality theatrical films to the market?"

The solution can be found in Basner's own company. FilmNation and Lotus Intl. are increasingly taking over their own project development.

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