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Cannes: IM Global Inks Output Deal With China's Huayi Brothers (EXCLUSIVE)



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Los Angeles indie sales powerhouse IM Global has struck an output deal with China's Huayi Brothers Media to handle international sales on Huayi's Chinese film productions.

Titles will be represented by IM Global's Anthem division, which specializes in non-English-language pictures, and cover all territories outside Greater China (mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong).

Huayi, China's largest private sector film group, last week revealed its latest "H-Plan," a 32-picture production and distribution slate running to end 2015.

The line-up includes romantic comedy "Women Who Flirt," starring Huang Xiaoming and Zhou Xun, directed by Pang Ho-cheung; "A Tale of Three Cities," a true story based on the life of Jackie Chan's parents, starring Tang Wei and Sean Ching-Wan Lau and directed by Mabel Cheung; "Abducted," a dramatic story of a child's kidnapping and its aftermath, starring Andy Lau and Jing Boran; and "Love on a Cloud," a high-tech romance starring Angelababy and Chen He, directed by Gu Changwei.

The deal specifically excludes any films flowing from Huayi's proposed relationship with former Warner Bros. chief Jeff Robinov's Studio 8 company. Huayi president James Wang Zhonglei recently reiterated plans to invest \$120 million-\$150 million into the new Robinov entity which is expected to produce predominantly English-language movies and set a major studio-level global distributor.

IM Global is arranging private screenings and presentations for its new Chinese-language additions during the Cannes Market.

The Stuart Ford-headed company last year opened an office in Beijing, overseen by former Huayi Bros. executive Leslie Chen. The office is a hub for Apsara, IM Global's acquisition and pan-Asian releasing operation, as well as its Southeast Asian rights licensing business.

Huayi and IM Global gave the new deal a soft launch at the Hong Kong FilmMart in March, when they occupied adjacent booths.

"Since we opened our Beijing office last year gaining a high profile foothold in the international sales of major Chinese films has been a priority for us and we couldn't wish for a more dynamic or prestigious partner than Huayi Brothers," said Ford.

"With the rapid growth of the Chinese film industry, finding the right partner was a high priority for us to expand beyond our domestic market. IM Global's expertise and international reach will be essential to fully exploit the global market," said Wang.

IM Global is also launching sales in Cannes on big budget Jackie Chan English-language thriller "Civilian" to be directed by Peter Segal ("Grudge Match") and on director Lu Yang's Chinese-language "Brotherhood of Blades," starring Chang Chen, Liu Shishi, Nie Yuan, Wang Qianyuan and Li Dongxue, and produced by action producer Terence Chang ("Face/Off," "Red Cliff," "Mission: Impossible II").

Further out, Huayi's slate includes the next films by top Chinese directors Feng Xiaogang, Tsui Hark, Chen Kuo-fu and Wuershan. Feng, whose "Personal Tailor" was a major hit in December, has been an in-house director at Huayi since its beginning 20 years.

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