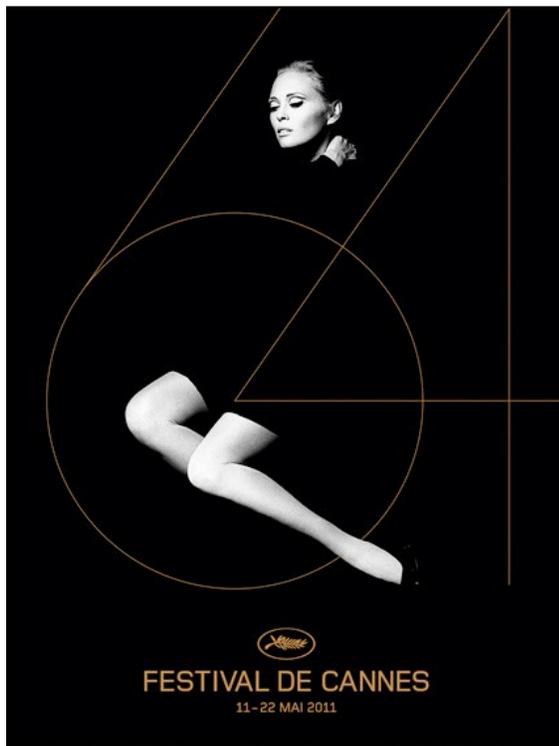


## Will Festival Films Deliver at the Box Office? (Cannes 2011)

The big budget sell-outs offering risk and potential return include “Ender’s Game”, “Parker”, “Cloud Atlas”, “The Brothers Grimm: Snow White” and “Pompeii.”

By Scott Roxborough, Stuart Kemp

May 17, 2011



Like crazed revelers at a festival soiree, buyers at this year’s Cannes Festival have gorged on big budget indie titles and drunk deep on pre-sales. But will they wake up with a hangover?

While some are hailing this year as a return to the pre-crisis glory days – “extraordinary,” “huge” and “best-ever” were the most-used adjectives among sales heavyweights – there remains the big question of whether Cannes hot pre-sale titles, when delivered, can deliver at the box office.

The big budget sell-outs offering risk and potential return in equal measure include Sierra/Affinity’s *Ender’s Game* and *Parker*; Exclusive Films’ *Snitch*; *Cloud Atlas* at Focus Features International; FilmNation’s *The Brothers Grimm: Snow White* and Summit Entertainment International’s *Pompeii*.

*Pompeii* was molten hot at the market this year, selling out around the globe.

But will E1, which set Croisette veterans tongues wagging about the prices paid for U.K. and Canadian rights to **Paul W.S. Anderson**’s volcano disaster movie, get burnt? Will other *Pompeii* buyers, Icon in Australia, France’s TF1, Spain’s Aurum and Rai in Italy among them, enjoy an eruption of cash on the film’s release next year or be buried alive?

The speed at which *Pompeii* sold out — Cannes had barely opened before Summit closed the world for the title — suggests buyers are convinced the film is a safe bet. Summit is pitching the \$100 million epic as a *Titanic*-esque historic disaster movie, where the action will be anchored by a strong love story.

“It felt like the big title, not just of our slate, but of the entire market,” Summit International’s **David Garrett** said. “The thing about *Pompeii*, it’s got everything — adventure, disaster, a love story.”

In addition to *Pompeii*, Summit also did nicely by *Tarzan 3D* and *Step Up 4*. Notably, all three movies will be in 3D, underscoring the ravenous appetite overseas for the technology. Elsewhere on Summit’s slate, Garrett said Teresa Palmer-Nicholas Hoult zombie pic *Warm Bodies* is almost sold out while *Step Up 4* “cleaned up.”

Elsewhere, Exclusive Films International has sealed a slew of international territory deals on *Snitch*, the **Dwayne Johnson** starrer directed by **Ric Roman Waugh**.

Co-financed by Exclusive, Participant Media and Imagenation Abu Dhabi, the film has landed with, among others, Hoyts (Australia), VideA (Italy), Metropolitan (France), Playarte (Latin America), Paradise (CIS), Independent (Benelux) and Nu Metro (South Africa).

And buyers from around the world have eagerly snapped up *Great Hope Springs*, starring **Meryl Streep**, which Lionsgate International has been repping in the market.

**Vanessa Taylor**’s screenplay about a middle-aged couple, to be played by Streep and **Tommy Lee Jones**, who seek out a marriage counselor, played by **Steve Carell**, sparked interest in plenty of territories. **David Frankel** (*The Devil Wears Prada*) is on board to direct.

**Helen Lee Kim**, president of Lionsgate International, orchestrated a slew of sales with Alliance taking the U.K. and Spain, Wild Bunch picking up Germany and Italy, and Metropolitan taking France.

The flurry of dealmaking inside IM Global’s suite in the Palais extended across the slate of nine projects Ford’s company arrived here with. “It’s the largest number of new titles we’ve ever brought to a market, and business is incredibly strong across the entire slate,” Ford said. That slate includes James Wan’s newly announced supernatural thriller *Spectre*, which has Nicole Kidman attached to star and which has pre-sold to Momentum in the U.K., Aurum in Spain, Koch in Germany, Top Film in Russia, Icon in Australia and Gussi in Latin America, and **James McAvoy** and **Mark Strong** starrer *Welcome to the Punch*, which went to Metro in the U.K., Square One in Germany and Pinnacle in Australia.

The big money spends, the risks accepted and the return of aggressive dealmaking and bidding wars after two comparatively passive years make for good reading. But the proof will be in the watching in 2012 and beyond, when the pre-sale becomes a box office hopeful..