



Madonna to promote 'W.E.' in Berlin

IM Global flying out stars to woo buyers

By Diana Lodderhose

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Stuart Ford's IM Global is courting overseas distributors, flying Madonna and Kevin Smith to the fest to tubthump their pics.

Madonna, who will screen portions of her second directorial effort "W.E.," starring Andrea Riseborough, Abbie Cornish and James D'Arcy, to a small group of international buyers today, came to Berlin when promoting her first directing project "Filth and Wisdom" in 2008. Her quickie visit will include a Q&A after screening.

Likewise, Smith was here to woo international buyers with his horror pic "Red State," which he notoriously announced he was self-distributing in Sundance last month, after giving the proverbial middle-finger to the indie biz in Park City.

"I think their presence helps immensely," said Ford. "First of all, it depends on the personality of the filmmaker, and Kevin and Madonna can sell and articulate their film better than we can. It's a fantastic communication exercise to have them talking to distributors.

"Both have a very strong voice and a profile of their own outside of the film, so for distributors, it sends an important message that they are willing to travel and support the film."

At AFM last year, Exclusive Media Group brought George Clooney to the AFM to shop his project "Ides of March" personally to buyers at the market. Exclusive ended up selling the project worldwide as a result.

But is the expense of flying out these stars and footing their hotel bill worth the money?

"Absolutely," said Ford. "To fly them out here and put them up for a few days in a hotel is nothing in context of making multimillion dollar deals on their films."

Ford adds that already buyers from major international territories are biting on Smith's pic, and he expects deals for Blighty, Australia, France and Germany to close over the weekend.

