

Action, special effects helps Hollywood in China (Update)

March 28 2014, by Louise Watt



In this Monday, March 24, 2014 photo, fans watch actress Scarlett Johansson, left in foreground, sign her autograph during a publicity event ahead of the April release of her movie "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" in Beijing. Captain America and Spiderman are seeking to dominate the Chinese box office in the coming weeks, proving that U.S. patriotic superheroes can overcome China's leeringness of foreign films if they promise big money. Chinese authorities, wary of outside cultural influences and competition, restrict the number of foreign movies shown in the mainland's cinemas to 34 each year. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Captain America and Spider-Man are seeking to dominate the Chinese box office in the coming weeks, proving that U.S. patriotic superheroes can overcome China's leeringness of foreign films if they promise big money.

Chinese authorities, wary of outside cultural influences and competition, restrict the number of foreign movies shown in the mainland's cinemas to 34 each year.

Such big Hollywood blockbusters with action, adventure and special effects tend to be Hollywood's most successful imports to China. Only a handful of this year's Oscar winners have been shown so far in mainland China, including the 3-D space odyssey "Gravity," highlighting how visual spectacle translates better than dialogue-driven drama. Oscar best picture "12 Years A Slave" and the other leading Oscar-nominated movie "American Hustle," which in the end went home empty-handed, haven't been shown here.

"The American movies that have succeeded in this market in a big way typically have special effects, lend themselves to 3D and are emotionally satisfying stories," said Doug Belgrad, president of Columbia Pictures, which is behind the new Spider-Man film, in an interview in Beijing.

"I think we're all learning about the Chinese marketplace, it's growing so quickly and probably the demographic make-up of the audience is changing, but it seems like there's a young audience, romance seems to work pretty well here, adventure heroes, I think those are ingredients that work well."

Hollywood is keen to get a big slice of China's movie market, which is now the world's second biggest after the United States. Movies increasingly contain China elements to appeal to the audience, such as "Gravity's" inclusion of a Chinese space station and the casting of actress

Fan Bingbing in a Chinese version of "Iron Man 3."



In this Monday, March 24, 2014 photo, fans wait for the arrival of Chris Evans, the actor playing the lead role, during a publicity event ahead of the April release of his movie "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" in Beijing. Captain America and Spiderman are seeking to dominate the Chinese box office in the coming weeks, proving that U.S. patriotic superheroes can overcome China's leeriness of foreign films if they promise big money. Chinese authorities, wary of outside cultural influences and competition, restrict the number of foreign movies shown in the mainland's cinemas to 34 each year. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

At a news conference in Beijing this week to promote "The Amazing Spider-Man 2," which is scheduled for release in mainland China on May 4, two days after its U.S. release, the movie's producer was asked whether the audience could expect to see female characters from China

in sequels.

"Emphatically yes, you will see that," responded Matt Tomach, explaining that "China's an enormous part of the movie-going world and our community."

Zhao Zhiyong, an official at Beijing city's bureau of press, publication, radio, film and television, said that for a foreign film to be successful in China, it should have a story line that is "touching and can arouse empathy."

"The film has to be able to produce strong emotion in Chinese viewers, and this is related to cultural understanding. This doesn't mean that the film has to feature Chinese actors or actresses, rather it should know what Chinese are interested in," said Zhao in an interview Thursday.

China's authoritarian government strictly controls print media, television, radio and the Internet. Movies have to clear censorship, and those that fail don't necessarily know why, although China censors according to political sensitivities and cuts excessively sexual and violent material.

One surprise approval last year was Quentin Tarantino's violent slave-revenge movie "Django Unchained," which debuted only to be pulled on opening day for unspecified "technical reasons." After undergoing an edit, it returned a month later.



In this Monday, March 24, 2014 photo, actress Scarlett Johansson stands between Samuel L. Jackson, left, and Chris Evans during a publicity event ahead of the April release of their movie "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" in Beijing. Captain America and Spiderman are seeking to dominate the Chinese box office in the coming weeks, proving that U.S. patriotic superheroes can overcome China's leering of foreign films if they promise big money. Chinese authorities, wary of outside cultural influences and competition, restrict the number of foreign movies shown in the mainland's cinemas to 34 each year. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Robert Cain, a Los Angeles-based producer and entertainment industry consultant, said Hollywood movies that make it to China are usually visual-effects driven, action or animated movies that appeal to young

adults aged about 18-25—those films likely to make the most money.

"Captain America: The Winter Soldier," involving the warrior soldier dedicated to defending U.S. ideals such as truth, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, is a Marvel Studio title that is scheduled for release in China on April 4.

China has led overseas box office for every Marvel Studio title since the 2012 release "The Avengers," according to information from The Walt Disney Company, which owns Marvel Entertainment.

"Apparently the authorities there don't mind the rah-rah America kind of movies," said Cain. "I think maybe 10 years ago the attitude would have been a little bit different, but now I think they feel the audience has matured and is sophisticated enough to know these are really just fantasy stories.

"Anything that remotely has a sniff of being anti-China is a completely different story but that's not the case with these superhero movies, I think they just see them as being big moneymaking fantasy vehicles," he said.

© 2014 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Action, special effects helps Hollywood in China (Update) (2014, March 28) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-action-special-effects-hollywood-china.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.