

# Hoping for a blockbuster, studios plan movie on Tetris game

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This May 22, 2009, shows the puzzle video game Tetris at Barcade in the Brooklyn section of New York. The \$80 million project is the first from the newly formed Threshold Global Studios, a joint venture between Chinese entertainment investor Bruno Wu's Seven Star Works and producer Larry Kasanoff's California-based Threshold Entertainment Group. Chinese-American movie studio hopes to produce in a sci-fi thriller based on the popular 1980s video game Tetris. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File)

It lacks the building blocks of characters and a plot for now, but a

Chinese-American studio hopes to turn the Tetris video game into a blockbuster movie.

Threshold Global Studios is budgeting \$80 million to strategically rotate, slide and drop the famed 1980s stacking game into a sci-fi thriller.

The project is the first for the studio, a newly formed joint venture between Chinese entertainment investor Bruno Wu's Seven Star Works and producer Larry Kasanoff's California-based Threshold Entertainment Group, which produces live-action movies.

"For our debut project, Threshold Global Studios will bring one of the most beloved, cross-generational gaming brands in the world to the big screen as an epic, sci-fi thriller," Kasanoff said in a statement.

The video game requires players to arrange and clear bricks that fall faster and faster into a rectangular matrix at the bottom of the screen before they run out of space. Tetris has survived the transition from desktop to console to smartphone better than most other popular video games from the 1980s, such as Pac-Man. Whether it will survive the transition to the big screen is less clear.

"The fact that I loved playing Tetris when I was an elementary student doesn't mean I will see the film at all. Actually, the idea of making it into a film sounds extremely silly," said personal trainer Xu Jie, 30, interviewed in downtown Beijing on Wednesday.



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A hairdresser who only gave his surname, Ju, said that although he played Tetris as a boy, that wouldn't be enough to entice him to watch the movie. "I don't think I will go to the cinema to see a film like that, because I don't see any interesting story there. It doesn't sound appealing at all," said Ju, 29.

Tetris was invented in 1984 by Russian Alexey Pajitnov, who drew

inspiration from a puzzle board game. He named it after the Greek word "tetra," meaning "four," and "tennis," his favorite sport. In China, the game translates as "Russian Cube Block."

The Sino-U.S. co-production fits into Hollywood's own strategy of teaming up with Chinese companies in the hope of striking big with the fast-growing Chinese market, now the world's second-largest box office behind North America.

The joint venture "will make cross-cultural movies for the global market," the studio statement released Tuesday said. Kasanoff added that the 32-year-old Tetris "is a perfect first project for this strategy."

Shooting will begin next year and there are plans to film in China and feature Chinese actors.

The movie, which wasn't named in the studio's statement, follows in the mold of such computer game-inspired film productions as "Resident Evil," "Tomb Raider" and "Mortal Kombat."

Kasanoff produced two "Mortal Kombat" movies. Wu is founder and CEO of Sun Seven Stars Media Group, a private media and entertainment investment company in China.

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