



New Australian-Chinese co-production feature announced

Thursday 20 April 2017: Overnight in Beijing, Screen Australia announced a new Australian-Chinese co-production feature *At Last*, making it the eighth official co-production to receive approval.

The announcement was made at a screen industry networking event, in partnership with Ausfilm and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, designed to further energise Australian-Chinese working relationships and identify co-production opportunities with Chinese producers and production companies.

In attendance were Ausfilm members including Screen NSW, Film Victoria, Screen Queensland, Screenwest, City of Gold Coast, Soundfirm, Spectrum Films, Show Group, Stage & Screen and The Appointment Group. Stand-alone private enterprises were also present, including production house Sydney Films who intend to identify 20 existing or potential co-production films with a total investment budget of AUD\$400 million (¥2 billion*).

Screen Australia manages the official co-production program on behalf of the Australian Federal Government, with **Richard Harris**, Head of Business and Audience stating, “We have seen increased interest in Australian-Chinese co-productions with *At Last* being the fourth feature announced since late 2015. This upswing in activity is the result of seven years of engagement with the Chinese screen industry and the sustained support of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television in China.”

“China is currently the world’s second-largest movie-going market and co-productions are an essential growth stream for the Australian industry, this is over and above the existing appetite for Chinese television and film productions being shot in Australia.”

Debra Richards, CEO Ausfilm said, “We have been building the Australia China Film Industry Exchange in partnership with Screen Australia and the Australian Embassy in Beijing for the last seven years. And more recently Ausfilm and its members, with the support of the Embassy have brought an annual delegation of Chinese filmmakers to Australia to see the locations; the state-of-the-art facilities, studios and services; and to meet with Australia’s world renowned technicians, crew and talent - essentially to experience all that Australia has to offer.”

“*Bleeding Steel*, which filmed in Sydney and starring Jackie Chan is one such outcome of this ongoing relationship.”

The latest co-production *At Last* is the story of a couple from Beijing who find themselves caught in a complex art heist while on holiday in Australia. The feature will be written and directed by Yiwei Liu and produced by Jackie Jiao, Todd Fellman, Charles Fan and Vanessa Wu, from China’s Monumental Films, Australia’s Roadman Films and Story Bridge Films.

Casting is currently underway with production expected to commence in Australia from mid-July. Financing will be provided by Orient Image Entertainment, Gravity Films, Shineland Media, China Lion and Screen Queensland.

Screen Queensland CEO **Tracey Vieira** said *At Last* would shoot in Queensland, providing approximately 200 jobs and injecting \$10.8 million into the local economy.

“*At Last* has come to Queensland as a direct result of the Queensland Government’s \$30 million screen industry funding injection over four years,” Ms Vieira said.

“The film will showcase a range of Queensland locations and will be the setting for this film which has the potential to grow tourism from China into our state,” Ms Vieira said. “Queensland producers have been working extensively to build relationships with Chinese producers and it is fantastic to see another official co-production in our State.”

At Last marks the 8th Australian-Chinese co-production announced since the official treaty was put in place in 2008, and joins a growing list which includes *Guardians of the Tomb* starring Li Bingbing from writer/director

Kimble Rendall (*Bait 3D*) currently in post-production and two additional features *My Extraordinary Wedding* and *Tying the Knot* which are yet to commence production. A further feature *Dog Fight* wrapped production last year, with *33 Postcards*, *The Dragon Pearl* and *Children of the Silk Road* also produced to date.

Beyond co-productions, several Australian films have enjoyed Chinese box office success, most recently *Hacksaw Ridge* which grossed AU\$80 million (¥419 million) and was granted an extended theatrical release, rare for foreign films usually limited to a 30-day run. This follows the success of cult hit *Bait 3D* which grossed AUD\$24.4 million (¥127 million).

Australian films are also regularly selected for Chinese film festivals, including *The Death and Life of Otto Bloom*, which has been shortlisted for the prestigious Tiantan Award at the 2017 Beijing International Film Festival (16-23 April).

In addition there are a growing number of Chinese productions being filmed in Australia, including *Bleeding Steel* starring Jackie Chan which was the largest budget Chinese production ever to shoot in Australia and for which a new teaser was unveiled at last night's event. The upcoming production *Butterflies Across the Sea* will be one of the biggest budget Chinese television series to ever have been filmed outside of China and joins *Speed* which recently wrapped filming in South Australia.

The number of Chinese films released in Australian cinemas is also increasing (e.g. 30 releases in 2015 compared to 13 releases in 2014) including 2016's *The Mermaid* which achieved AUD\$1.3 Million (¥6.7 million) at the Australian box office.

Australia's Ambassador to China HE Ms Jan Adams AO PSM said, "The Australian Embassy proudly supports Screen Australia, Ausfilm and the Australian screen industry. Our work together delivers public diplomacy and economic diplomacy benefits by highlighting Australian creative excellence, deepening cultural understanding and delivering business opportunities in a fast growing market. 2017 is the Australia China Year of Tourism and marks the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations. It is a great time to be making co-productions."

*Foreign exchange conversion as of 18 April 2017