



Australian Government



TRAVEL REPORT

Third Australia-China Film Industry Forum (ACFIF) and the Shanghai International Film Festival 13–16 June 2013

Report by Dale Fairbairn, Marketing Manager Industry Support

Screen Australia CEO, Dr Ruth Harley, led a delegation of 24 Australian film professionals to the third Australia-China Film Industry Forum (ACFIF) and to also attend meetings and industry events for the opening of the 16th Shanghai International Film Festival. This year Screen Australia was co-sponsor of the event with Ausfilm and it was organised by the Australian Embassy Beijing, with the support of the Australian Consulate-General Shanghai. Other Forum partners were SPAA and the Australia-China Screen Alliance. Valuable support and assistance was provided by the following Chinese organisations: the Shanghai International Film Festival, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, China Film Coproduction Corporation, China Film Group and the Shanghai Media Group. The full list of Australian delegates and Chinese participants is at Appendix A.

The forum was held over two days on 13 and 14 June at the Glamour Bar on the Bund overlooking the river, a convenient and functional location for the mix of panel sessions, business matchmaking meetings and networking drinks. The event was opened by Ruth Harley who gave a welcome address followed by a short presentation by Michael Clifton, Senior Trade Commissioner and Deputy Consul-General Austrade, about doing business in China.

There followed four panel sessions spread over the day. They were devised to raise some of the most relevant current issues for Australian-China business relationships, evidenced by some lively discussion and questions from the floor.

The sessions were

1. Australia-China Co-productions – the current co-pro environment based on practical recent experiences; the legal framework; explanation of the Chinese foreign film distribution system and recent updates (Quota increased from 20 to 34 in Feb 2013); the benefits of co-production as a means to reach the Chinese market. Panellists: Mario Andreacchio (Australia-China Screen Alliance), Kristian Kender (CMM Intelligence), Miao Xiaotian (China Film Group)
2. Film Financing – practical local advice on financing co-pros with China, especially relevant was the information from Village Roadshow Asia's Ellen Eliasoph about the reality of the size of the Chinese

theatrical market and advice to not unnecessarily worry about piracy – “You can make millions from theatrical”. There are currently limited ancillary revenue streams. Panellists: Mathew Alderson (Harris Moure LLC), Ellen Eliasoph (VREG Asia), Abe Kwong (Enlight Pictures).

3. Post-Production and Visual Effects – the rapid growth of post-production demand in China; partnering opportunities for post-production and visual effects companies. Panellists: Alan Lindsay (VUE Group), Paul Willey (Soundfirm Sydney), Geng Ling (Soundfirm Beijing).
4. 3D Development Opportunities – this was the liveliest session and provoked the most questions from the floor, partly due to the on stage interaction between Marcus Gillezeau, producer of *Storm Surfers 3D*, and Wang Dafang of the Tianjin Film Group who expressed interest in the film being distributed in China. 3D is a fast growing phenomenon in China. Discussions continued off stage amongst panel members and the audience. Panellists: Wang Dafang (Tianjin Film Group), Marcus Gillezeau (*Storm Surfers 3D*), Nicholas McCallum (*The Friend 3D*), Shen Hongxiang (Soulpower Culture media Ltd).

The Australian Consul General, Ms Alice Cawte, hosted a reception that night for all the ACFIF delegates. Welcome speeches were made by Consulate General Cawte, Dr Ruth Harley and Wang Fengling, Vice President and Secretary General of the China Film Producers’ Association.

Day two of the ACFIF was dedicated to business matching sessions. Each delegate was given a schedule containing approximately 10 meetings matched to them by a specialist Chinese business facilitator. Feedback from participants has been positive and discussion on the day was lively. We are awaiting DFAT’s and Ausfilm’s survey results.

Mario Andreacchio’s AMPCO Films and the Shandong Film &TV Media Group held a press conference at the end of the business sessions for a public signing of documents leading to their new Australia – China Co-production *Gold Road* due to commence production in Australia in 2014. It is planned to be the first in a multi-film agreement between the two companies encompassing production, development, financing and education/training.

ACFIF concluded with an informal networking drinks session enabling further meetings and introductions amongst the attendees.

Following an invitation over lunch from the Chairman of the Shanghai Media Group, Xue Peijian, most of the Australian delegates enjoyed a river cruise and lunch at the Shanghai TV Tower on Sunday 16 June. SMEG owns these tourist attractions and it was an excellent way to learn more about Shanghai, to network amongst the group and to debrief after the ACFIF.

16th Shanghai International Film Festival

June 15 to 23 2013

Festival

This year the Shanghai International Film Festival enjoyed more than 300,000 admissions to the record number of films- 1,655 features and 2,064 shorts from 112 countries.

There were three Australian films in the program – *Lore*, *Storm Surfers 3D* and *Death in Paradise*. Both *Lore* and *Death in Paradise* had previously screened in the Beijing Film Festival in April (where *Lore*'s Cate Shortland won the Best Director Award and its cinematographer Adam Arkapaw won Best Cinematography).

Ruth Harley and Dale Fairbairn were invited to walk the red carpet on the opening night at the Shanghai Cultural Centre, along with 400 other guests and officials and which was televised live to local audiences. The Opening Ceremony included special award presentations to directors Oliver Stone and Johnnie To. The jury was introduced, led by director Tom Hooper and the opening night film was *Monsters University*.

The feedback from the attending filmmakers about their screenings was that they went well but not always at the scheduled times. The published film directories could be used as a guide only as to screening dates and times. Attending directors got to do Q and A sessions, but not the producers, which they found frustrating. Shanghai, like most international film festivals, has a focus on directors.

The festival's screening program included countries of focus UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Thailand and Brazil.

Forum

Mario Andreacchio was the only Australian speaker at the Winston Baker SIFForum, a series of panel discussions and workshops held over 5 days, which mostly gave a Hollywood/China perspective. The content was aimed at newcomers to Chinese co-pros, and pitched lower than the content of the ACFIF, as confirmed by some of the Australian participants.

The topics included Creating Content for a Global Audience; Evaluating the Right Films to Invest In; the Chinese Capital's Long March to Hollywood; Big Data: New Motivation of Chinese Films.

International speakers included Michael C. Ellis, President and Managing Director, Asia-Pacific Region, MPA; Stephen Stites, Vice President, Goldman Sachs; Ron Giambra, President Theatrical Worldwide, Rentrack; Maarten Melchior, Fintage House; Sid Ganis, Former Vice President, Sony Pictures.

Market

SIFFMart, the festival's dedicated film market, was small with mostly Chinese companies represented amongst the stands. Whilst 137 companies were listed in the guide, the on the ground presence seemed less.

Countries represented amongst the stand participants to sell films were Thailand, France, USA, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Singapore, and Japan.

There was one Australian project in **Pitch and Catch**, a face to face pitching event to match projects with potential financiers. It was *Gourmand* from producer Paul Sullivan and director Giovanni Pacialeo. There were 21 projects in total – China 12, Korea 3, Malaysia 1, NZ 1, USA 1, Canada 1, Italy 1, and Australia 1.

Conclusion

The interest from Chinese businesses in working with Australia is still very strong and there are good opportunities to be explored. Australian films are enjoying a positive standing in China at the moment following the successful release of *Bait 3D*, *Sanctum* and *Dragon Pearl*.

Australia represents sound business systems, good management practices, interesting stories and access to the global market in a friendly and co-operative style, and not in a domineering way.

The benefits to Australian businesses are access to the very large Chinese market as well as access to finance.

Other film industries are already there, especially Hollywood. It seems this window of opportunity may not be available indefinitely.

The Chinese, who have been working with the US for some time, are particularly keen for more official co-productions from other countries (which automatically entitles a film to a Chinese release) and for the release of films of international commercial standing from additional countries. The recent support of *The Great Gatsby* (a qualifying Australian film) in obtaining a Chinese release and the interest in *Storm Surfers 3D*, indicates that successful Australian films are ideally placed to gain entry to a market that limits entry of foreign films.

Appendix A

Australian Delegation ACFIF

Ampco Mario Andreacchio

Ampco Geoff Rischbieth

Bearcage Films Michael Tear

Bearcage Films Serge Ou

Bearcage Films View Yuan

Benchmark Films Paul Sullivan

Bunya Productions Ivan Sen

Cascade Films David Parker

CM Film Productions Carmelo Musca

Complete Post Kerri Schwarze

Complete Post Chris Schwarze

Essential Media and Entertainment Alan Erson

Firelight Productions Marcus Gillezeau

Firelight Productions David Clune

Mayblossom Productions Paul He

NJM Worldwide Nicholas McCallum

ScreenWest Defrim Isai

SeaLight Pictures Yan Zhao

Soundfirm Paul Willey

Southern Light Films Timothy White

Story Bridge Films Todd Fellman

Vue Group Alan Lindsay

WBMC Janelle Landers

ZAC Toons Troy Zafer

Chinese Attendees ACFIF

Asia-Pacific Producers Network Zhao Xiaoke

Beijing Film Co-productions (BFC) Michelle Wang, Director/Producer

Beijing Television (BTV) Chen Dali, Executive Director

Beijing Television (BTV) Ai Dongyun, Executive Editor-in-Chief

Beijing Wenhua Shengdian Company Li Ying

Champsis International Li Mingzhao

China Film Group (CFC) Mr Miao Xiaotian, Vice President, China Film Group, Beijing Production Corp

China Film Producers' Association Mr Wang Fengling, Vice President and Secretary General

China Media Monitor Intelligence Mr Kristian Kender, Partner/Business Development Director

Enlight Pictures Mr Abe Man-Wai Kwong, Vice-President

Midra Culture Communications Co Ltd Li Huan, Deputy GM

Shanghai ETVMEDIA Bao Jialu, Chief Producer

Shanghai Media Group Xu Zhihao, Vice President

Shanghai Yaosen Culture Co. Zhu Chenyu

Soulpower Films Mr Shen Hongxiang, Chief Operating Officer

Soundfirm Mrs Geng Ling, General Manager, Beijing

The Pearl River Film Media Co. Ltd Wang Jiancheng

Tianjin North Film Group Corporation Mr Wang Dafang, President

TWR Entertainment Inc. Dr Charles C Lee, Chief Executive Officer

Village Roadshow Entertainment Group Asia Ellen Eliasoph, President and CEO

Attending Sponsors and Organisers

Screen Australia Dr Ruth Harley, CEO

Screen Australia Dale Fairbairn, Marketing Manager Industry Support

Ausfilm Debra Richard, Chief Executive Officer

Ausfilm Kristy Officer, Head of Marketing and Business Development

Austrade Michael Clifton, Country Manager China, Senior Trade Commissioner Shanghai, Deputy Consul-General

Australian Consul-General to China Alice Cawte

Australian Embassy Beijing Michael Growder, Counsellor Public Affairs and Culture

Australian Embassy Beijing Jennifer Mason, Second Secretary – Public Affairs and Culture

Australian Embassy Beijing Katie Tan, Senior Cultural Relations Project Officer