

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

NOVEMBER 07, 2013
THR.COM/AFM | AFM | No. 2

LOS ANGELES WEATHER AND HIGH TEMPS TODAY 81° F 27° C TOMORROW 76° F 24° C

SPIKE LEE BOARDS DISCO BIOPIC

By Pamela McClintock

As the American Film Market got underway Wednesday, Foresight Unlimited's Mark Damon and filmmaker Timothy Scott Bogart were delivered a sizeable gift: Spike Lee's deal to direct Justin Timberlake in their Neil Bogart biopic *Spinning Gold* is closed.

Lee is a potent boost for the project, which stars Timberlake as the late Neil Bogart, the infamous record executive who was closely aligned with the rise of disco. Tim Bogart is Bogart's son, and wrote the script.

"Spike's exploration of the complexities of his characters is exhilarating. No one does it better," Tim Bogart told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "I reached out to him personally and directly about six weeks ago. He asked me to come to Brooklyn, and I took a red-eye flight. We talked all the next day."

A poor kid from Brooklyn, Bogart went on to define the pop-music culture of his time (Lee

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

China's Xue Calls For Genre Fare

By Clifford Coonan

Director Xue Xiaolu says the Chinese film industry still needs to mature, but the rise in contemporary movies and properly marketed genre pictures will help to keep box office revenues strong.



Xue

"There is a long way to go for the Chinese industry to be really productive and make really good films. Box office has grown exponentially

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Final AFM For Focus Features Int'l

Universal confirms it will shutter the London arm of its decade-old specialty film unit, bringing what industry insiders call the end of an era By Pamela McClintock and Scott Roxborough

The 2013 edition of the American Film Market started on a downbeat Wednesday as Universal confirmed suspicions that Focus Features International will be out of business by the end of the year. Widely respected FFI chiefs FFI Andrew Karpen and Alison Thompson will use AFM to wrap up business with buyers and bid their goodbyes.

Marking the end of an era, FFI's demise is part of an overall restructuring of the Universal-owned specialty label that consolidates operations in Los Angeles and puts FilmDistrict founder Peter Schlessel in charge. FFI, boasting 16 employees, was based in London, where co-president Thompson ran the show.

Focus Features, the mothership, was headquartered in New York, housing the offices of former CEO James Schamus (who founded the company more than a decade ago with David Linde) and co-CEO Karpen, who also served as president of FFI. Karpen was offered to stay on, but he declined, saying he did not want to relocate his family to Los Angeles.

FFI has long been one of the biggest players on the global indie scene, handling a vast array of auteur-driven films. Over the years, the outfit

handled international sales on behalf of numerous Focus Feature titles, including many of Woody Allen's films, *Lost in Translation* and, more recently, Wes Anderson's acclaimed *Moonrise Kingdom*. Selling off foreign rights played a crucial role in raising financing to cover part of those films' production budgets. Focus International also handled numerous third-party titles, providing a major revenue source for Focus Features.

"The broader question is whether the kind of high-end art house films that Focus was famous for have any kind of future," said Alexander van Dulmen of East European distribution group A Company. "Those films have a really hard time in the market at the moment."

FFI's AFM suite at the Loews is sure to become something of a curiosity factor. Thompson and Karpen will continue to sell exiting titles, including horror pic *Oculus*, the untitled Amy Winehouse documentary and Mike Leigh's J.M.W. Turner film.

Karpen and Thompson weren't available for comment on Wednesday. They had been informed in recent days, if not weeks, of the decision to close the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Simon Pegg gets his El Mariachi on for his new role, playing a ruthless assassin in Kriv Stenders' crime thriller *Kill Me Three Times*. "I personally believe comic actors make the best kind of villain," said Stenders on why he cast the goofy Brit for the role.