

# INSIDE TRACK

## Producers acquire Beck saga 'Pimp'

By Borys Kit

Rob Weiss, an executive producer on HBO's "Entourage," has acquired with producers Mitch Davis, Ryan Drexler and Andrew Left film rights to Robert "Iceberg Slim" Beck's urban autobiography "Pimp: The Story of My Life."

Born into poverty, Beck became a pimp at 18 and rose to kingpin status in the Chicago underworld. He served several stints in prison,



Weiss

making one escape, eventually retiring and becoming an insecticide salesman in Los Angeles. During a call to a college professor, Beck mentioned he

was a pimp, and the professor encouraged him to write an autobiography. Three months later, Beck had penned "Pimp."

The book has sold more than 5 million copies since its release and is the second-best-selling book written by a black man behind Alex Haley's "Roots."

"The story is really the birth of the American inner city, and it's an incredible tale of over-coming oppression," Weiss said. "It speaks of a very specific time in America and its street culture. The book is filled with broken souls but shows how, in the end, Iceberg found a way to heal himself."

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## THR extra

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### ▲ Blockbuster status?

"Star Trek." "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen." "The Time Traveler's Wife." It might sound wacky, but on a pound-for-pound basis, the romance should be considered one of the most successful openings of the summer, up there with the biggest studio tentpoles, Steven Zeitchik writes.

### ► Wrath of Khan

Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan said he felt angry and humiliated after he was detained and questioned for several hours Friday at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, sparking an uproar in India among his fans.

## Writing duo has 'Millions' at stake

By Borys Kit

Michael Diliberti and Matthew Sullivan have been tapped to pen "Brewster's Millions," the latest take on the George Barr McCutcheon novel set up at Warner Bros.

The 1902 novel, which became a play in 1906, has proved a popular film subject, with this project being its eighth incarnation. Popular versions include the 1945 film starring Dennis O'Keefe and directed by Allan Dwan, and the 1985 comedy starring Richard Pryor and John Candy and directed by Walter Hill.

The story centers on a man who inherits \$1 million from a rich grandfather. When a rich uncle who hated the grandfather also passes away, his will leaves the young man \$7 million — but under the condition he spends the grandfather's million within a year and does not end up with any assets from the spree.

Diliberti and Sullivan got the gig coming off the buzz generated by their spec "Comic Con," a buddy comedy that revolves around two friends who form a justice league of comic geeks to plan and execute a daring heist at Comic-Con to



Fatty Arbuckle, top, and Richard Pryor (shown with John Candy) are among the actors who have portrayed the title character in "Brewster's Millions."

save their beloved neighborhood comic shop from the clutches of a corporate takeover. Principato-Young is attached to produce, and New School Media, which reps the duo, is exec producing.

The scribes met while attending Johns Hopkins University. Sullivan segued into stand-up comedy, and Diliberti spent several years as an assistant to Scott Rudin, acting as an associate producer on the Rudin-produced "Stop-Loss." Diliberti, who got married during the weekend, also was a creative exec at Paramount.

Diliberti and Sullivan additionally are repped by WME. **THR**



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## CLIPS

### C&BINET MEETING

Music-download service Spotify, Disney and Microsoft will join dozens of other international creative businesses to debate how to foster success and secure creative rights at the first U.K. government-backed Creativity and Business International Network, to take place Oct. 26-28 in

London, culture secretary Ben Bradshaw said. Dubbed C&binet, the conference is the government's attempt to boost growth in the creative industries.

### HOT TIME IN HAVANA

Colombian rocker **Juanes** is feeling heat from Cuban exiles who argue his planned

Peace Without Borders concert in Havana is an endorsement of Cuba's communist government. Event promoters insist the Sept. 20 concert will have no ideological overtones, even if it is staged in Havana's Revolution Plaza with its famed building-size



homage to fallen revolutionary Ernest "Che" Guevara. The Grammy-winning Juanes is known for his social activism.

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### DUFFEL BAGS

Singer-actress **Hilary Duff** took her Blessings in a Backpack program

to Colombia on Friday to distribute 3,000 knapsacks of food to poor children. Duff and USA Harvest founder Stan Curtis started Blessings in a Backpack for children who get their best meals at school, giving them backpacks of food every Friday to take home and share with their families.

**'CHINESE' TAKEOUT**

"She, a Chinese," from Chinese novelist-turned-film-maker Guo Xiaolou, captured the Golden Leopard on Saturday at the 62nd Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland. A tale of a Chinese village girl who sets off for a London she has seen only on glossy calendars, "Chinese" was funded

by public sources in the U.K. and Germany.

**LI LENDS A HAND**

**Jet Li** and other celebrities attended a televised fundraiser Friday for victims of Taiwan's worst storm in 50 years. Typhoon Morakot



killed more than 500 after dumping nearly 80 inches of rain on the island the previous weekend, triggering landslides and flooding villages. The show had raised nearly NT\$380 million (\$11.6 million) by late Friday evening, Hong Kong's the Sun newspaper reported on its Web site.

**TO RETRO**

Hong Kong director Johnnie To will be honored with a 10-film retrospective at the Pusan International Film Festival, set for Oct. 8-16. The fest depicts To as one of the last bastions of a Hong Kong cinema that began to dissipate after the territory's handover from the U.K. to China.

**A VIEW TO KILL**

The Goldeneye retreat, where author Ian Fleming created superspy James Bond, will undergo a \$50 million expansion, the estate's owner, music and hotel mogul Chris Blackwell, said Sunday. Eleven beachfront cottages and a restaurant will be built on the sprawling Jamaica property.

**INSIDE TRACK****FILM**

# China's private sector wants in

*Firms like Bona, Huayi Brothers see opportunity after WTO ruling*

By **Jonathan Landreth**

**B**EIJING — With last week's WTO ruling that could signal the beginning of the end of state control of film and DVD import and distribution, private companies in China are hopeful they might soon compete for a piece of the nation's booming boxoffice.

For most of the past eight years since China's accession to the WTO in 2001, China Film Group has controlled most of the 20 import licenses that grant foreign films the right to a modest slice of box-office earnings, usually about 13%.

As China's boxoffice booms, hitting \$635 million in 2008 after five years of double-digit growth, private Chinese film companies applauded the WTO ruling that could help them expand into a segment of the business from which they largely have been excluded.

"The ruling will be of most benefit to the audience, which will

have a greater choice of what to see, but it will also benefit everybody else on the movie-industry food chain, from the private distributors to the theater chains to the companies selling popcorn."

*"We would like to join in. The game was unfair, but I believe complete competition is coming."*

— **Wang Zhonglei,**  
president of private media firm  
**Huayi Brothers**

said Geoffrey Chan, COO of Bona International Film.

Before CFG consolidated control of import licenses, Bona used an allotment belonging to the Changchun Film Studio to bring "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" to China's big screens. "It proves we've always had an interest," Chan said.

Although Bona has no immedi-

ate plans to get back into theatrical distribution, Chan said, "As a distributor, we're always ready."

Wang Zhonglei, president of Huayi Brothers, another leading private media firm, called the ruling good news for private firms.

"We would like to join in," he told the Xinhua news agency. "The game was unfair, but I believe complete competition is coming."

China has 60 days to lodge an appeal with the WTO in Geneva.

While Hollywood was the driving force behind the U.S. complaint that led to the ruling and has been the most vocal in celebrating victory, the biggest changes if the ruling is adopted could come for filmmakers from Europe and other Asian territories.

No longer would French and South Korean films, for instance, have to fight as hard with the big Hollywood pictures that typically have been granted the lion's share of annual import licenses.

Lin Xiaoxia, associate professor at the Beijing Film Academy, defended the policy that has allowed CFG — and behind it the Film Bureau of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television — to control what China's audience gets to see in cinemas.

"Film in China can be hardly a pure commercial product," Lin said. "Its educational and social functions are still important. It's understandable China takes measures to protect the film industry from being invaded by foreign products." He added that, despite evidence Chinese films are doing well at the boxoffice, he believes the nation's industry is "too weak" to compete. **THR**

# New castmember has 'Wright' stuff

By **Steven Zeitchik**

**NEW YORK** — Fox Searchlight's Queen Latifah comedy "Just Wright" is rounding out its cast.

The production has added Michael Landes, who will play the role of Nelson.

Landes this summer is shooting the Alyssa Milano-topped romantic comedy "My Girl-friend's Boyfriend," in which he plays one of the romantic leads. The CAA-repped actor also has



Landes

had roles in Overture's romantic drama "Last Chance Harvey" and Screen Gems' thriller "Lakeview Terrace."

"Wright,"

which centers on

a romance between a physical therapist and her basketball-player patient, is shooting this summer in New York. Common and Pam Grier also star in the pic, being helmed by Sanaa Hamri ("Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2"). **THR**

# Manager will go Underground

By **Steven Zeitchik**

**NEW YORK** — Josh McGuire, a manager who counts Black List scribe Jason Micallef among his clients, has joined Trevor Engleson's Underground Management.

McGuire comes from Washington Square Arts, where he repped a host of literary clients including Micallef, the writer behind "Butter." That script was the third-ranked screenplay on last year's Black List and is set up

at Mandate, with Jennifer Garner attached to star.

McGuire had been at the boutique Washington Square for three years. Underground reps such up-and-comers as "War of Gods" scribes the Parlapandis brothers and the Hageman brothers, who are writing Warner Bros.' Lego project.

The company also counts "License to Wed" and the upcoming Robert Pattinson drama "Remember Me" among its producing credits. **THR**

**BLOG OF THE DAY****Legal eagle**

Actor **Jerry O'Connell** has enrolled at Southwestern Law School, **Matthew Belloni** reports at **THREsq.com**.

