

Screen Gems in step with 'Planet B-Boy'

Benson Lee to adapt his breakdancing doc into feature

By Borys Kit

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Screen Gems has tapped Benson Lee to adapt his award-winning breakdancing documentary "Planet B-Boy" into a feature to be produced by Beau Flynn and Tripp Vinson of Contrafilm.

The 2007 documentary focused on the international world of B-boying, commonly known in the U.S. as breakdancing. Although the urban dance waned in popularity stateside after peaking in the 1980s, it has evolved and thrived in countries including Japan, South Korea, France and Germany, where in underground form it became more aggressive and athletic. "Bionic b-boying" is how Lee described it.

The doc followed dancers from several continents, culminating in a competition between crews from 18 nations vying for title of world champion at the annual Battle of the Year finals in Berlin.

The new "B-Boy" will tell the story of a legendary b-boy crew that must return to its roots to reclaim the world championship by competing against the top international breakdancing teams. The take is described as "8 Mile" meets "The Warriors."

Amy Lo also will produce. Contrafilm's Lisa Zambri who will co-produce the project. The studio is looking for a writer.

Dave Scott, an acclaimed dancer and choreographer known in b-boy circles whose credits include "Stomp the Yard" and the "Step Up" films, will serve as choreographer.

In the '80s, Lee practiced break-dancing, whose roots grew out of New York gang culture. He rediscovered his passion in the late '90s when he saw how the form had survived and gone global.

"Dance fads come and go, and they don't usually come back," Lee said. "This one did come back, stronger than ever, and on a global scale. It's a dance for those who like hip-hop and that speaks to the youth who aren't signing up for tap or jazz."

Lee decided to turn his doc into a fictional narrative when he realized "there was a lack of very real street dance films out there."

"B-boying is one of those street dances that has been co-opted in many films but never portrayed authentically," he said. "I want to present b-boying for what it actually is, which one of the most powerful street dances out there right now. And with so many countries involved, it presents a different kind of story than what we're normally used to seeing in street dance films."

Clint Culpepper and Shannon Gauldin are overseeing "B-Boy" for Screen Gems, which makes movies aimed at specific demos and under a certain budget cap. Under Culpepper's aegis, the company just released its latest hit, "Obsessed," which opened to \$28.6 million last weekend.

Contrafilm, which last worked with Screen Gems on the horror thriller "The Exorcism of Emily Rose," is developing a remake of "Red Dawn."

Lee's first movie, "Miss Monday," premiered in the feature competition at Sundance in the late 1990s and was picked up by Lakeshore International. He is repped by ICM and New School Media.