

East Goes West - Chinese Filmmakers in the United States

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“The Cinematic Equivalent of Cantopop: China Lion Film Distribution in the US.”

Since 2010 China Lion Film Distribution has released forty-one Chinese-language films in North America on a day-and-date schedule with the People's Republic of China. Recently, China Lion has hit its stride, with a string of seven films that each grossed more than US\$100,000 in limited release in the United States and Canada. This presentation looks at the history of China Lion since its 2010 debut in the U.S. market and the broader implications of its recent successes.

Chinese-language films have long been marketed in the United States, but unlike the kung-fu films of the 1970s, the Fifth Generation arthouse fare of the 1980s, or the Hong Kong gangster movies of the 1990s, which were aimed at Western sensibilities, China Lion focuses on bringing middlebrow Chinese-language commercial fare to Chinese expats in North America.

In February 2015 China's box office for the first time has surpassed that of the United States, and China boasted a robust production slate of 618 feature films in 2014. China/U.S. co-productions are also increasing, including Zhang Yimou's upcoming film *The Great Wall*. At the same time the Chinese community in the U.S. has seen a new influx of Chinese-speaking immigrants from the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. China Lion's North America marketing reflects an attempt to capitalize on these various forces.

How do China Lion's recent releases in U.S. multiplexes differ from past attempts to bring Chinese and Hong Kong cinema to North America? How does this increase reflect China's rapidly expanding film industry and the growing relationship between the China, Hollywood, and the global film market at large? How does China Lion's success relate to the changing demographics of the Chinese community in the U.S.?