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## Major sci-fi work set for big screen test

Companies join forces to adapt the Three Body series for cinema audiences, **Zhang Kun** reports.

Beijing Enlight Media has joined hands with the Three Body Universe Cultural Development to work on the movie adaptation of the Three Body trilogy, which will be directed by Zhang Yimou, the international award-winning filmmaker who also directed the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Wang Changtian, president of Beijing Enlight Media, revealed the project during the forum New Horizons in Film: Embracing Innovation and Diversity, an important part of the ongoing 26th Shanghai International Film Festival where insiders around the world meet to share their insights about the future of the industry and reveal their upcoming projects.

"We have started the preliminary work on the movie and believe it will be a big-budget production," Wang said during the opening session of the forum on Sunday. "I hope it will achieve breakthroughs in the international market."

The trilogy is arguably China's most celebrated science-fiction creation through the past decades. The movie by Liu Cixin won the prestigious Hugo Award and has been made into an animation series and TV series in China. Earlier this year, Netflix released a TV series adaptation, which received more than 123,000 ratings on [IMDb.com](http://IMDb.com), a leading worldwide resource platform for movie and TV productions.

Wang spoke about the project after sharing his findings that some genre films popular in the global market have not taken an adequate market share of the box office in China.

For example, he says, animation films take up more than 15 percent of the total box office in the United States while in China they take an average of 7 to 8 percent. Sci-fi movies are faced with a similar situation. This convinced him that more efforts should be made in the crea-



French director and writer Tran Anh Hung (6th from right), as the jury president, leads members of the judging panel of the 26th SIFF Golden Goblet Awards' main competition onto the red carpet during the ceremony held in Shanghai on Saturday. **FANG ZHE / XINHUA**

tion of animation and sci-fi films in China. Wang believes that sci-fi movies represent the industrial height of a country and China still has a long way to go in this field.

Wang Jian'er, president of Shanghai Film Group Co, says that an effective way to increase the earnings of animation films in China is to create spinoff shows for popular productions and have commercial collaboration for the most beloved characters.

Last year, Shanghai Animation Film Studio, a branch of Shanghai

Film Group, released an eight-episode cartoon series named *Yao - Chinese Folktales*. It featured stories inspired by Chinese folklore involving immortals, elves and other mythical creatures known as "yao", presented in diverse and individualized aesthetic styles for each episode. The series was popular among viewers as soon as it was released on [bilibili.com](http://bilibili.com), a streaming platform.

Shanghai Animation Film Studio is working on a spinoff feature film for the hero of the first episode — a half-human, half-piglet creature

with a kind heart. "It will be released next summer," Wang Jian'er says.

But one challenge is that by the time the movie comes out, people may lose interest in a character, as pointed out by Li Jie, president of Alibaba Pictures Co. He found that the public's interest in particular subjects and film genres can fade quickly.

"It usually lasts for no more than 12 months, while the production of a new film usually takes at least 24 months," Li says.

"This means we have to reach beyond the duration of public inter-

est and focus on creating quality films that give people reasons to go to the cinema, to see big-budget films that provide a unique audio-visual experience ... I believe that in the coming 10 years, bigger investments will be made in China's film industry and big rewards will be achieved."

While Chinese movie productions are taking a larger share of the domestic box office volume, industry insiders agree it is important to participate in the global market.

Ying Xujun, deputy president of CMC Inc, shared the company's expe-

rience producing *The Meg* and its sequel in 2018 and 2023, respectively.

The action movie featured an international production team led by CMC Inc in collaboration with Warner Bros. "We believe such a model of international collaboration will work well with sci-fi movies in the global market," she says. The company is confident in furthering its exploration in this field, leveraging international resources and creating movies with multilingual dialogues and fewer cultural barriers.

She also points out that Chinese filmmakers need to actively participate in the global filmmakers' community. "Only when you are a player in the global movie industry will you be able to understand its structure and ecology."

International resources can be an important asset for film productions targeting the Chinese market, she says, citing the example of the company's new thriller *Decoder*. The spy drama involving decoders from China and the US will be directed by Chen Sicheng, who is also the scriptwriter, alongside co-writer Christopher MacBride.

New technology is another important element for development in the film industry worldwide, such as artificial intelligence. AI not only provides handy tools but is a "creative partner" capable of generating unexpected and brilliant ideas, according to Wang Jian'er. He says that the company founded an AI creative center in Shanghai's Songjiang district to explore new possibilities in the film industry.

Yu Dong, founding director of Bona Film Group, reveals that in the company's upcoming film *A Legend*, which is a sequel to the 2005 fantasy film *The Myth*, an AI-generated version of Jackie Chan in his youth will be fighting alongside real actors and "you can hardly tell one from the other."

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