

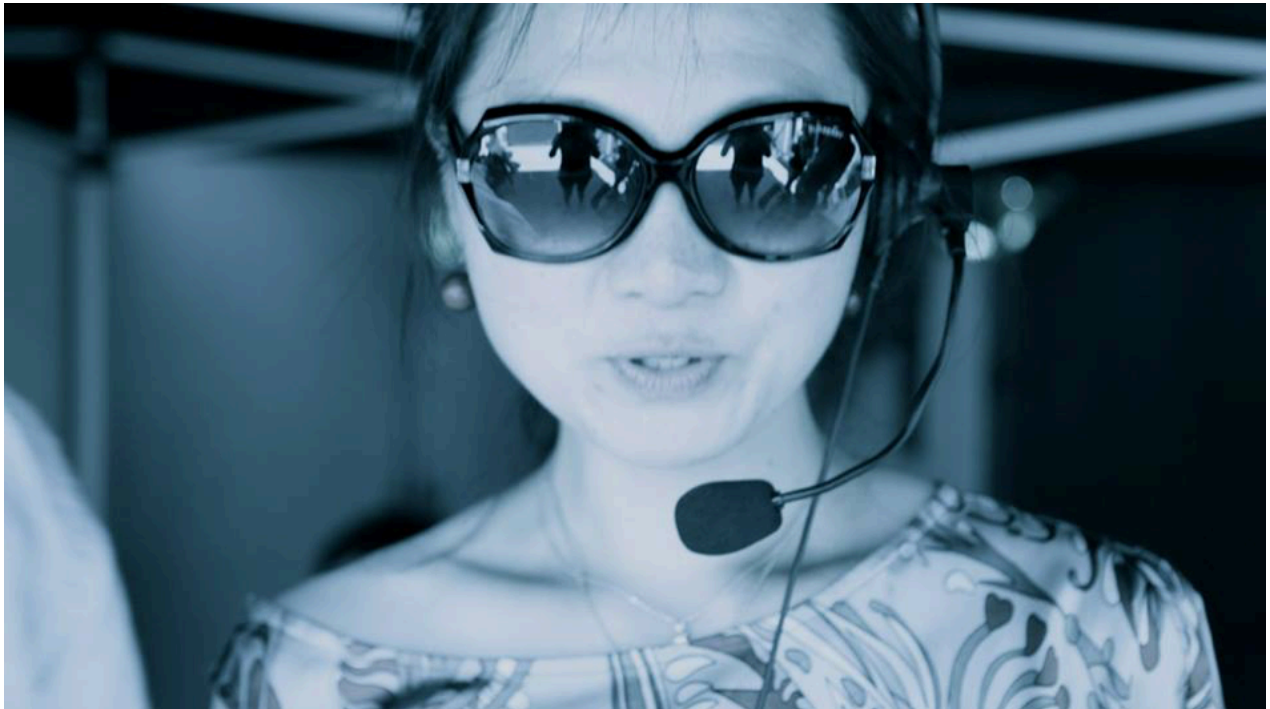
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China and U.S. Film Markets Produce Partnerships

FEBRUARY 3, 2017 | LGREENBAULM | LEAVE A COMMENT



Producer Bochen Zhang shot by Sara Bezdob

Last month, Chinese-based film companies Huahua Media and Shanghai Film Co. announced a \$1 billion deal with Paramount. It comes one year after China media conglomerate Dalian Wanda Group purchased Legendary Entertainment for \$3.5 billion. The trend for major Hollywood-China partnerships is growing, with large future investments promised as China is set to surpass the U.S. in box office receipts later this year (<http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2016/11/14/china-set-to-overtake-u-s-as-worlds-largest-cinema-market/>).

“Chinese moviegoers are hungry for content,” said Hollywood-based Producer Bochen Zhang, originally from Tangshan, China. She grew up watching American movies like *The Lion King* and *Titanic*.

Zhang is typical of the artists and filmmakers who are now in demand as international partnerships drive the film industry. Zhang began her career in China working in commercial production for brands like MasterCard, VW and Procter & Gamble before entering the world of creative production.

“I started to become restless with the kinds of production we were doing,” said Zhang. “When I learned how important characters and storytelling were to every kind of media, that changed everything for me.”

When she won an award for her production work on the multi-award winning short film, *A Part Apart*, Zhang knew she wanted to move to Hollywood to gain the expertise and connections to be a part of the Hollywood-China film boom.

While Zhang was learning the ins and outs of the digital and film business, China’s influence in the world market grew. China became the world’s #2 film market in 2012, just ahead of Japan. Since then, China has added 10 new screens a day and has seen a 34% jump in box office revenues, according to a report last year from IHS Markit.

“Chinese audiences love American films, but they are ready to produce their own extraordinary content, too,” said Zhang.

Like many young filmmakers from China, Zhang came to Hollywood, first earning her MFA at the American Film Institute and later producing films lauded on the international film festival circuit. She helped produce *Unremarkable*, which was shortlisted for a prestigious BAFTA Award and *Wonderland*, which earned a “Jury Award” at UCLA’s MFA Director’s Spotlight, Zhang earned a “Best Producer” nomination by the TMC London Film Festival for her work on *The Strangeness of Coming Home*, a story of an American war veteran.

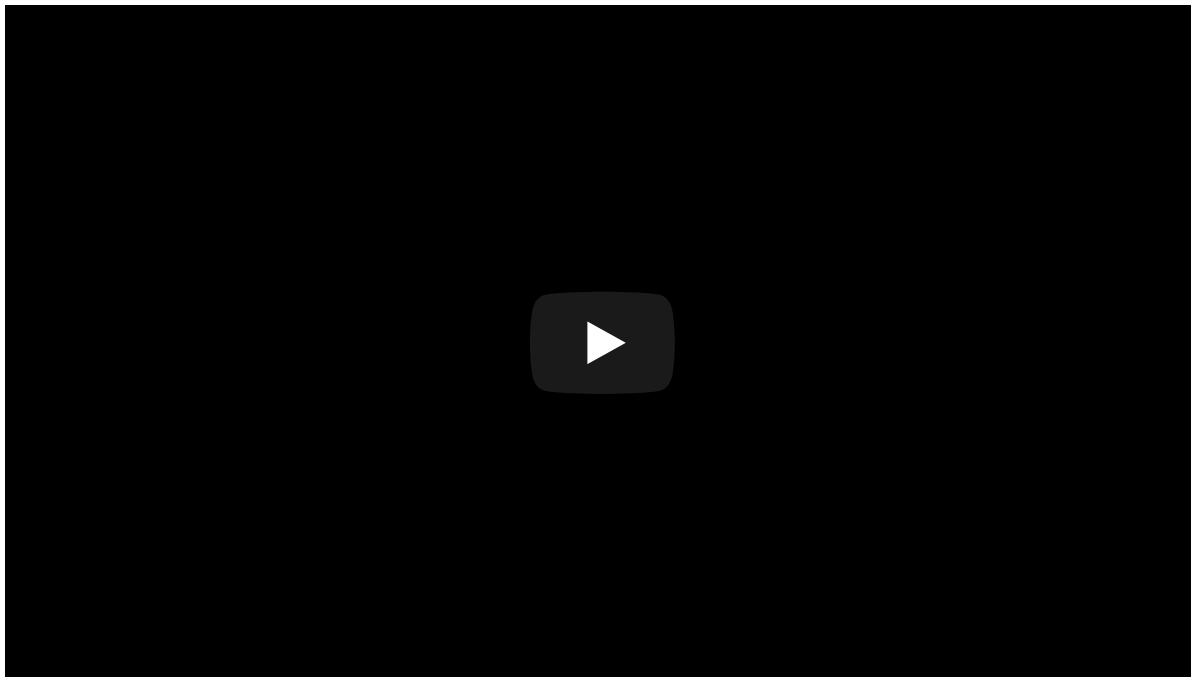
Zhang is now poised to be part of the estimated billions in digital partnerships between China and U.S.-based productions. “Chinese people have become a sophisticated audience,” said Zhang. “Digital content is a natural extension of that phenomenon.”

Late last year, Zhang helped to produce *On Pilgrimage in a Jeep*, a four-episode web series celebrating Jeep’s 75th anniversary. She led the production team from China across the U.S. on an off-road excursion through terrain like the Rubicon Trail in California.

The series was produced by The Bag Ladies Productions (Shanghai, Hong Kong and Bangkok) for the NYSE listed Chinese interactive auto platform, Autohome.com.cn. The site draws more than 93 million viewers per month. *On Pilgrimage in a Jeep* (<http://m.autohome.com.cn/share/video/87475#pvareaid=2028135>) episodes garnered over 8.83 million views on the Auto Home site, and also streams on iQiYi, (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IQiyi>) the largest online video platform in China, with more than 219 million users.

“I think the U.S. is still very aspirational for China. At the same time, China has built the capacity, technology and expertise to take on a bigger role in production partnerships,” says Zhang. “Being in the middle of that intersection is the reason I came to Hollywood.”

This year Zhang produced the concept film *Virtual High* starring Kylee Russell (*Mississippi Damned, Jump In!*) and Chelsea Zhang (*Andi Mack, The Cheerleader Murders*). Directed by Alexander Berman (*App, Songs From The Tundra*) and Camille Stochitch (*Maria Bonita, Interstate*), *Virtual High* is the story of teen adventures in a virtual high school.

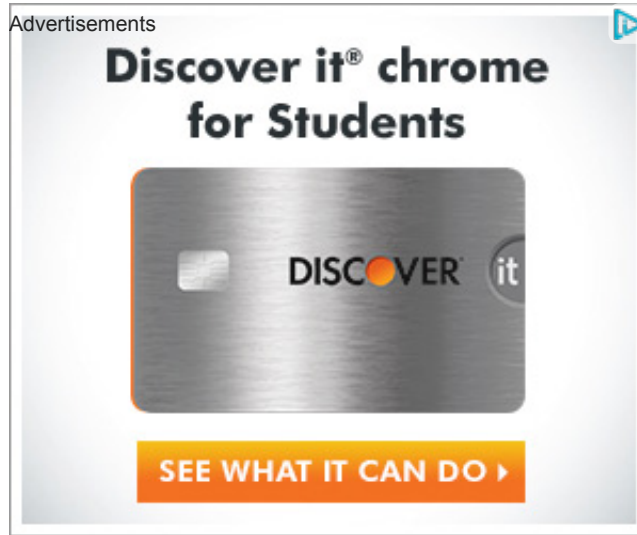


Last August, Disney Channel premiered *Virtual High* on their YouTube Channel, which has nearly one million subscribers. It earned more than 100,000 views upon its release. Disney Channel approved the concept and is now developing it into a digital series.

Zhang is working to develop several independent films, currently in pre-production, in addition to a project with Netflix, *Ultimate BeastMaster*, that is a partnership with the U.S., China and four other countries. “With any project, my goal is to bridge this cultural gap that divides so many of us,” said Zhang. “The way I think that happens is through characters and stories, because that’s what connects all of us.”

Zhang is a Hollywood-based producer and has guest lectured at American Film Institute and University of

New Orleans.



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