

# The Chinese Connection

Singapore-based CHINAnimax moves forward with full slate of animated series and feature projects.

The animation industry in China has come a long way since the 1920s, when the Wan brothers dazzled the world with silent classics such as *Princess Iron Fan*. These days, Chinese animators deliver over 40,000 minutes of animated shows just for domestic TV consumption. (Total broadcast demand is estimated at about 300,000 minutes a year.)

Not surprisingly, the country's government, industry and educational institutions are devoting impressive resources in developing more projects in this booming sector. In recent years, Zhejiang Zhongnan's Animation Video has emerged as one of the most prolific companies in the region. In 2006, the studio launched its international distribution arm—the Singapore-based CHINAnimax Pte. Ltd.

"China is the fourth largest and one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and we predict continued growth in the animation industry in the country in 2008," says Zhejiang Zhongnan's chairman Mr. Jianrong Wu. "We believe that animation is both a sunrise industry and a green industry." He adds, "Riding on this rapid growth and using our great cultural foundation, high versatility and adaptability, we're able to penetrate the global market quite quickly."

The company's first animated project, *Magic Eye*, a 2D-animated 156x22 series was a huge hit. It centered on the adventures of a boy from an alien planet who lands on Earth on his summer vacation. The show was followed by *Magic Wonderland*, a CG-animated 26x22 project which focuses on a beautiful heroine and is inspired by some of the positive traditional values of Chinese culture and history. The show was delivered last March.

CHINAnimax had a successful presence at the October MIPCOM market and will bring

some of its new projects to interested parties at the Asia TV Forum this month. The company will offer three new programs: the 2D animated boys' action series *Galaxy Racers* (52x22), the CG action package *Highway Battle* (26x22) and the colorful CG-animated preschool show *Rubi* (104x2). Also on tap will be online games developed in conjunction with two of the studio's hit toons, *Magic Wonderland* and *Swirl Fighter*.

When asked about the obstacles faced by his three-year-old studio, Wu responds, "The biggest challenge we're facing is that our culture is too strong, and the global market requires a certain amount of time to explore and accept this culture. Generally, there is an interest on behalf of the West toward Chinese history, culture, legends and myths. Our challenge is to create products that can satisfy this interest, to share the uniqueness of our Chinese culture and history and to let the world know that our excitement and interest goes beyond just the *Monkey King* and other more familiar fare."

According to Wu, the most famous locally produced TV animated series in the region have been CCTV's *The Legend of Nezha* and the studio's own *Magic Eye*. According to a recent report in the Beijing News, the country's State Administration of Radio, Film and

Television (SARFT) decided to ban all foreign cartoons between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. daily. This means that no foreign cartoons or programs can be shown during primetime on all domestic cartoon channels and children channels. However, foreign cartoons may be shown on these channels after 8 p.m. Cartoon



programs co-produced by domestic and foreign producers will have to get approval from SARFT to air during primetime. CHINAnimax has two CG-animated features in the works as well—36 *Stratagems* and *Monkey King*—both of which are open to series development as well.

"We are going into the international market—whether it's North America, Europe or China—in a big way," he adds. "We have also produced a CG-animated feature, *The Legend of the Sea*, last year with a company in Singapore. We're making a lot of effort in promoting ourselves and Chinese animators to plan co-productions with foreign professionals."

Wu is firmly optimistic about the future of animation in his home country. "We adopt a very open mentality and attitude in engaging in cooperative opportunities with strong foreign producers," he notes. "The Chinese animation industry is still at its infancy stage. Therefore, we humbly admit that there's room for improvement in terms of executing a creative idea and our technical know-how. To have a successful venture in the global market, it's pertinent to have concrete and practical experiences. That's how we can better master the intricacies such as the relationship between creation and production, art and business and within the industry ... it's all about the fine art of balancing!" ■

For more information, visit [www.chinanimax.com](http://www.chinanimax.com).

