

THE *Hollywood* REPORTER®

All hail the king: "The Tudors" draws 1.3 million eyes. See page 3.

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Pilots Package 2007

ABC's "Football Wives"

NBC's "Area 57"

It's 'Bedtime' for Sandler with Disney

By Borys Kit



Sandler

Adam Sandler is set to star in his first Walt Disney Pictures film, the family comedy "Bedtime Stories," being directed by Adam Shankman. Sandler also will produce with his Happy Madison partner Jack Giarraputo along

See **SANDLER** on page 26

Mac, Kauffman explore reality

Comic, Reveille greet 'Family'

By Nellie Andreeva

Bernie Mac has teamed with producer Ben Silverman for "Welcome to the Family," a reality pilot for NBC.

The project, from Mac's MacMan Entertainment and Silverman's Reveille, revolves around couples in love who are ready to take their relationship to the next level and get engaged. However, the



Mac

Silverman

spouses-to-be come from completely different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

"Family," which Mac will narrate, will feature the couple

See **"FAMILY"** on page 23

'Friends' vet conjures 'Gifted'

By Nellie Andreeva

"Friends" co-creator Marta Kauffman is making her first foray into reality television with "Gifted," an unscripted presentation for Fox set in the world of psychics.

The project, which she is executive producing with J.D. Roth, will test the skills of people who believe they have psychic abilities — such as reading Tarot cards and communicat-

ing with spirits — to determine the most gifted one. Roth's 3 Ball Prods. and Warner Horizon TV are producing.

"Gifted" stems from Kauffman's genuine curiosity about

See **"GIFTED"** on page 22



Kauffman

HanWay, Celluloid in merger

By Stuart Kemp

LONDON — U.K.-based HanWay Films and Paris-centered Celluloid Dreams, two of the best-known indie sales and finance houses on the festival and market circuit, announced plans Tuesday to merge and form the new banner Dreamachine.

Oscar-winning producer Jeremy Thomas and Celluloid principal Hengameh Panahi will serve as joint chairmen for Dreamachine, sharing an equal stake in the privately owned company.

Panahi's remit will be to oversee acquisitions and production, while HanWay chief executive Tim Haslam will serve as CEO of the

See **DREAMACHINE** on page 26

'Metal' forged at Warners for Shuler Donner

By Borys Kit

Mining for new projects, Warner Bros. Pictures is hoping to strike gold with the robotic superhero team "Metal Men," setting up the project with producer Lauren Shuler Donner. Eric Champnella has been brought on board to write.

Based on a DC Comics hero created by Robert Kanigher and Ross Andru in 1962, "Metal" revolves around a brilliant scientist, William

See **"METAL"** on page 22

Movies aid search for 'greater meaning'

By Gail Schiller

NEW YORK — Universal Pictures' unusual decision to rerelease "Peaceful Warrior" last weekend would seem out of step with a Hollywood busy promoting escapist comedies like "Blades of Glory" or 3-D family films like "Meet the Robinsons." But it points toward an emerging market that a number of entertain-

ment companies are attempting to tap.

Based on Dan Millman's "Way of the Peaceful Warrior" — its paperback edition carries the subtitle "A Book That Changes Lives" — the movie is the latest example of so-called "transformational" films targeting a growing niche audience that has been dubbed "cultural creatives."

"This is a genre and movement

that is absolutely coming of age," said John Raatz, founder and CEO of the Visioneering Group. "There is a hunger in this audience, and not only in this core audience but even in a larger audience of more mainstream-minded people who are yearning and searching for greater meaning in their lives."

Cami Winikoff, president of

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news

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'Metal'

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Magnus, and his creations: six highly advanced robots who have powers associated with their respective metals — gold, iron, lead, tin, mercury and platinum.



Champnella

made their first appearance in "Showcase," where they were created as filler but proved to be unexpectedly popular and received their own title. The heroes served as a dysfunctional family, and the stories balanced sentimentality, humor and action.

Jack Leslie of the Donners' Co. also is producing.

Geoff Johns, who was an assistant to Richard Donner before becoming one of the comic world's renowned writers, helped develop the take and will executive produce.

Dan Lin and Elishia Holmes are shepherding for Warners. Gregory

Instead of having to be programmed, the Metal Men can think for themselves, which is both their genius and their biggest flaw.

The heroes



Heavy "Metal": Warner Bros. sets up another DC Comics film project.

Noveck is overseeing for DC Comics.

Shuler Donner has a history of bringing comic books to the silver screen. She was behind the "X-Men" movies at Fox, which were based on the Marvel Comics superheroes, and 2005's "Constantine" at Warners, based on a DC Comics/Vertigo title.

Champnella wrote "Mr. 3000" and most recently "Say Uncle" for Warners. He is repped by ICM, Mosaic and attorney Dave Feldman. ■

'Gifted'

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the paranormal, which became deeper after her parents died. In her purse, she always carries a pendulum used by many to get "yes or no" answers to any question.

"I have always been fascinated about what we can't see and the gifts that people have that enable them to do incredible things," Kauffman said. "And I have always wanted to know if there is a way to quantify people's ability."

Emmy winner Kauffman, who is based at Warner Bros. TV, said she had never thought about doing an unscripted project until WBTV president Peter Roth asked her during a meeting if she had any reality show ideas. After her initial "No, you know I hate reality television" reaction, Kauffman said she began thinking about it and came up with the idea for "Gifted."

Peter Roth then put her in touch



J.D. Roth

with reality producer J.D. Roth, whose credits include hits "Beauty and the Geek" and "The Biggest Loser."

"We hit it off right away," J.D. Roth said. "I'm a huge fan of hers and the shows she's done, and for me to be working with her is a gift itself."

He breaks down people as 10% who firmly believe and are passionate about the paranormal, 10% who completely dismiss the idea and 80% who don't believe but want to.

"Most people want to believe," Kauffman said.

She and J.D. Roth are scouting locations this week, with production on "Gifted" slated to begin next week. If the project goes to series, the idea is for a panel of experts to narrow down the field of participants and to have the finalists possibly living under the same roof.

In addition to Kauffman and J.D. Roth, "Gifted" is executive produced by 3 Ball partner Todd Nelson.

The project reunites 3 Ball with Fox, where the company produced reality series "Unanimous."

Kauffman is repped by Endeavor and attorney Sam Fischer. J.D. Roth is repped by WMA. ■

Transformation

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Sobini Films, which produced "Warrior," said more than half of the company's development slate is devoted to producing films "that will have an impact on the world. There couldn't be a better example of that than 'Peaceful Warrior.' It is one of the best-loved books in the mind/body/spirit genre."

The movie version picked up slightly more than \$1 million when Lionsgate released it in limited release last year, but Universal was convinced the film possessed crossover potential. So it struck a deal with Mark Amin and Winikoff, two of the film's producers, and Lionsgate to rerelease it in 615 theaters with the help of an innovative marketing plan involving \$15 million in free tickets distributed by Best Buy. About one-fifth of the 1.5 million tickets given away were redeemed during the weekend. The studio reported a \$2.6 million boxoffice — with about 10% of the audience actually purchasing tickets rather than taking advantage of the giveaway, funded by Sobini Films.

"I didn't believe there was a traditional marketing campaign that would work for this film and effectively communicate why this movie is working for the people who are loving it," Universal president of marketing Adam Fogelson said. "People like Sting, Tony Robbins and Deepak Chopra are saying this is a movie that can help change people's lives. How could you ever make that statement in a marketing campaign and have anyone believe you?"

Despite the marketing challenge, Fogelson sees further opportunity in the growing audience for such transformational films. "I think there is absolutely a viable and powerful business model in making and distributing films for this audience," he said. "I think it starts with knowing there is a large enough and very passionate audience that can be found and spoken to and served. Whether it can expand beyond that I think is entirely a function of what kind of product is created."

Winikoff praised Universal for its effort. "You can't take a movie like 'Peaceful Warrior' and compete with a movie like 'Blades of Glory.' It's just too difficult to reduce some movies to a 30-second ad campaign. With Universal,

you've got a studio that's trying to come up with an idea to have these movies with meaning get into the marketplace in a way that can compete. I can't imagine that all the studios wouldn't like to make this business work financially."

The potential of this emerging film genre first attracted attention when "What the #\$*! Do We Know!?" a combination documentary-drama about science and spirituality made on a shoestring budget, grossed more than \$12 million at the boxoffice in 2004 and sold more than 1 million DVDs after virtually every distributor in Hollywood turned it down. Raatz said he worked with the filmmakers who released the movie themselves, convincing theaters in Los Angeles, Portland, Ore., and Phoenix to screen the film, which played to full theaters for five consecutive months before Samuel Goldwyn Films took over its distribution in summer 2004.

Goldwyn is known in the cultural creatives community as one of the theatrical distributors particularly interested in this type of fare. "We want to serve an audience that's underserved by the studios," Goldwyn president Meyr Gottlieb said. "We are actively looking for inspirational films, but we have to like a movie and have an emotional attachment to it before we get involved with it." Last fall, Goldwyn released "Conversations With God," adapted and inspired from the best-selling books by Neale Donald Waisch.

Inferno Distribution, which co-financed "Warrior" and is the film's international distributor, is interested in making films for the cultural creatives as well, but it's also looking for projects that can cross over to a wider audience. "We're looking for opportunities to get involved in films with themes that raise consciousness but that are still mainstream accessible," Inferno president Bill Johnson said.

The mind/body/spirit audience is not limited to film. AOL co-founder Steve Case's Revolution Living is a majority investor in the Lime multiplatform media company, which launched in late 2005 to provide programming for the LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) market. "Lime is a resource that urges us to be mindful of the choices we make in what we eat, how we live, what we buy and what inspires us," Lime

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Dreamachine

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company, responsible for sales and marketing. The new entity boasts a library of more than 500 titles including works from Woody Allen, Bernardo Bertolucci, David Cronenberg, James Ivory, Philip Noyce and Takeshi Kitano.

Dreamachine is sure to be big news at Cannes this year, boasting films from such helmers as Asif Kapadia, Todd Haynes, Johnnie To, Michael Haneke and Michael Winterbottom.

Panahi and Thomas told a select gathering of media that the new outfit will reduce the number of movies and filmmakers it represents, aiming to "make it far more focused and selective."

Panahi said the move to merge came on the back of increasingly hostile market conditions facing those selling distribution rights to foreign-language films on the global festival and market circuit.

The duo said the company harbors "no theatrical distribution plans of its own" and that Dreamachine plans to unveil "extensive and ambitious" plans in the digital distribution arena soon.

No timetable was given for such digital ambitions other than to say they would be "global" in scope and likely include North America. But the executives said the plan will be to concentrate largely on financing and selling English-language



Thomas



Panahi

titles and to continue both companies' history of birthing and shepherding director-led projects.

The company has inherited offices and staff in London, Paris and Toronto. Haslam pointed to the fact that the sales operation boasts representation in 35 territories around the world.

HanWay's Peter Watson and Stephan Mallmann and Celluloid's Philippe Aigle and Charlotte Mickie will have a place on the board of the operation, with varying undisclosed stakes in the business.

Watson and Aigle will be charged with expanding the company's financing and executive producing activities, managing and acquiring new library titles and looking at strategies for new media and digital distribution. Watson said he hopes to attract financiers to Dreamachine.

Mallmann, who will serve as COO, will manage the group's operations. Mickie and her staff in Toronto will concentrate on co-production, acquisition and sales for North American independent films. ■

Transformation

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founder and CEO C.J. Kettler said.

"Lime aims to provide introspection, reflection and practical suggestions of how each of us might better ourselves, our families and our climate." Lime content is available on Lime's broadband channel at www.lime.com, VOD, Sirius Satellite Radio, Apple's iTunes and Verizon and Sprint cell phones.

Lime's initial offerings have included programming from Chopra, yoga expert Rodney Yee and eco-stylist Denny Seo. Best-selling author and pioneer of integrative medicine Andrew Weil is launching his first-ever live call-in radio program on Lime Radio this month on Sirius. "We're not just looking to reach the people that we know are already in this category; we recognize that more and more this category is growing and has become part of the mainstream," Lime senior vp programming Judith Tolkow said. "We are creating a mainstream brand."

Gaiam, a \$220 million company that distributes 46% of the home videos in the health and wellness category, began expanding into theatrical production and distribution last year with two films — "Illusion," starring Kirk Douglas, and "The Real Dirt on Farmer John."

Gaiam also is the majority share-

holder of the Spiritual Cinema Circle — a subscription-based DVD film club designed to connect "spiritual" moviegoers worldwide — and owner of the Spiritual Cinema Network, a network of alternative venues such as churches, bookstores and community centers that screen movies with spiritual themes before theatrical or DVD releases and then split the proceeds with the filmmakers.

The emergence of the mind/body/spirit genre, the success of such production companies as Walden Media and Participant Prods., the visibility of such films as "Syriana," "Good Night, and Good Luck," "Fahrenheit 9/11," "Crash," "An Inconvenient Truth" and even "The Passion of the Christ" all suggest that moviegoers' appetite for films with deeper meaning — whether it be political, social, religious or spiritual — is on the rise.

The dangerous state of the world after Sept. 11 appears to be contributing to the trend. "Historically, when things in the world are difficult, complicated or scary, Hollywood has always looked to provide product that gives people an opportunity to both escape and/or imagine a better version of themselves or this world," Fogelson said. "I think now is the time that people want to laugh, feel good and imagine that the best is possible for themselves, their families, their friends and the world." ■

events

Today

"Little Mosque on the Prairie." Museum of Television & Radio presents U.S. premiere.

Cast and crew discuss the challenges of sensitive social and political issues in a traditional comedy show. 7 p.m., MT&R, Beverly Hills. www.mtr.org

An Evening With John Wells. Presented by the Writers Guild Foundation. The writer-producer will receive the WGA Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award. 7:30 p.m., Writers Guild Theater, Beverly Hills. (323) 782-4692. www.WGFoundation.org

AFI Music Documentary Series. AFI screens "Pink Floyd: The Wall." 8 p.m., ArcLight Cinemas, Hollywood. (323) 856-7896

Expanded calendar listings are available on our Web site: www.hollywoodreporter.com

Sandler

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with Andrew Gunn and his Gunn Films banner.

"Bedtime" features Sandler as a harried real estate developer whose life is turned upside down when the lavish bedtime stories he tells his niece and nephew begin to come true. Matt Lopez wrote the script.

Shankman said one reason Sandler signed on was "the fact that he is a new father, and the idea of making a beautiful Disney brand

fantasy is something that is in his heart right now.

"And he gets to play dual roles. He gets to play a regular guy and a knight in shining armor in the fantasy world. The comedic possibilities are limitless. And there is nothing better than Adam and kids. It's going to be really fun."

Production will begin this year for a holiday 2008 release.

Shankman and his Offspring Entertainment partner Jennifer Gibgot are executive producing along with Gunn Films' Ann Marie Sanderlin. Jason Reed is

overseeing for Disney.

Sandler worked with the Disney studio on the 1998 hit "The Waterboy," but that film was released under the Touchstone Pictures label.

The actor is onscreen in the Mike Binder drama "Reign Over Me." His most recent comedy, "Click," grossed \$137.3 million at the domestic boxoffice last year. On Saturday, he received the 2007 Kids' Choice Award for favorite movie actor.

Sandler is repped by Endeavor and Brillstein-Grey. ■

'Static'

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that gave me my start," said White, whose low-budget "Stomp the Yard" held the No. 1 spot at the boxoffice for two straight weeks earlier this year and grossed more than \$61 million for Sony. "Static" offers me

the exciting opportunity to paint an innovative near-future youthful reality within a high action-packed framework."

Guy Ritchie ("Snatch") most recently was attached to direct the long-gestating project (HR 7/25).

Sony's Matt Tolmach and Rachel O'Connor are oversee-

ing for the studio.

Original's Tania Landau is shepherding the project for the banner.

White, who is attached to direct an adaptation of the Frank Miller graphic novel "Ronin," is repped by WMA, Principato-Young and attorney Jeff Endlich. ■