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## Chinese Market

October 2006 distinguished it-self as a rich month for film exchanges between Asia and Europe. Two events most particularly have highlighted ASEM film exchanges during these autumn days; The Fifth FILM DEVELOPMENT MEETING in Tokyo and the release in Asia and in Europe of “ JADE WARRIOR”- the first-ever Chinese Finnish co production. Both events contribute to offer an insight into the Euro-Asian film production context, from which young filmmakers can find something to learn.

The Fifth FILM DEVELOPMENT MEETING – an event organized in Tokyo (22 – 26 October 2006) by ASEF and UNIJAPAN, focused on young film students from 20 countries in Europe and Asia. The event was conceived as a way to interest more future film professionals towards Asia-Europe film cooperation. The meeting, which developed within the framework of the 19<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International Film Festival, consisted in pitching sessions, as well as lectures dealing with all the film stages from scriptwriting to distribution.

During the same week, a twenty nine years old Finnish filmmaker saw its first feature film - which idea was originally developed at school - conquering the screens of China as no other Finnish film succeeded before. “JADE WARRIOR” - a genre film by Mr. A-J Annila, on the common mythological roots of the warriors in Asia and in Europe, was very well-received at Initial screenings to exhibitors and media in China. “*This unprecedented success for a Finnish film has prompted Warner China to decide to release the film on at least 150 prints in 70 cities on October 24*” – says a source at the Marketing and Distribution, Warner China Film HG Corporation.

Understanding the ingredients that make a student film concept successful for the distribution both in Europe and Asia was at the menu of the Tokyo meeting. The “JADE WARRIOR” movie, which idea was brought from the school bench of the [TAMPERE SCHOOL FOR ART AND MEDIA](#) to a unique co-production between Finland, China, Holland and Estonia will also continue to be used as a reference in seminars to come. For those of you who want to find more about this Finnish film now; the internet offers already a rich material that helps understanding the different stages in the development of this production.

[The “JADE WARRIOR” Official website](#), deserves a stop for its “Production notes” – a well detailed compilation of information with a paragraph for the different countries involved.

At the origin, the “JADE WARRIOR” was not more than the development of a student idea for a short “Kung Fu” films series made by Annila and some of his Finnish classmates. The films series called “HARD STUDENT-1”, “HARD STUDENT-2” until the last of the series “HARD STUDENT - 5”, have been released with success at local festivals. This was enough to persuade the young team to develop a more elaborated project called “MUNAVALA”.

The new project aimed to explore the Kung Fu film genre more in-depth, and its techniques were to be placed in an original script intertwining the Finnish “KALEVALA” epic with the Chinese mythology.

Doing so, the student’s idea was to make the first ever Finnish kung fu movie production. By the end of 2001, a ten-minute film of the “*MUNAVALA*” was available as a demo reel to help convincing production companies of the value of their project

### A DEMO-REEL NOT ONLY FOR THE LOCAL PRODUCER

Without the director demo – reel, the project would have hardly developed so well. The first production company to be contacted [BLIND SPOT PICTURES](#) was not impressed by the script; it was the ability and the understanding of the genre techniques present in the demo that persuaded the Finnish company to take the project. Later on, the same demo helped finding the first foreign co producer at a pitching seminary during the Berlin Film Festival 2003. San Fu Maltha founder and executive of FU WORKS came onboard as a co-producer and executive producer.

With [FU WORKS](#) as the Dutch co producer; the project opened to new deals. The Dutch company helped bringing the Chinese Production Company MING PRODUCTIONS, which at its turn brought in Warner China HG Corporation on the project. At this stage, “*JADE WARRIOR*” became the first ever Chinese – Finnish co production.

The agreement signed with China, followed other international agreements with Estonia. The shooting in this country started in September 2005 and lasted one month. The movie “*JADE WARRIOR*” (“*ARMUVALUS SÕDALANE*” in Estonian) became The most expensive co-production film in the history of film production in Estonia. The [ESTONIAN FILM FOUNDATION](#) supported up to 10 percent of the budget of the film between 2005 and 2006.

Eventually, the movie would allow Margus Õunapuu - the Estonian producer of the film and head of the FILM TOWER production company - to consider that “*JADE WARRIOR*” is also the first kung-fu film produced in Estonia.

An Estonian Kung Fu film, “Why not?” The “European Quality Label” alone is not enough to compete on the international market. A few options need to be considered for filmmakers that are trying to find their ways in other countries - among them; developing genre films. In a recent article on the success of Finnish films abroad; Mr Kai Tarkka (the author) reminds the advantages offered in producing film genre within the frame of the market expectations.

Firstly, the target audiences of genre film such as Kung Fu “*consist not only of the consumers of high culture but of bigger masses, as well.*” Consequently, not only the theatre house will determine the distribution of the production, “*DVD or the Internet can be used as the distribution channel*” as well.

Still in its article, Mr Kai Tarkka reported the thought of the “*JADE WARRIOR*” Finnish producer about the chance for student films to reach the much lusted Chinese film market. The chances seem to be excellent with “*international financiers that are ceaselessly looking for a new director guru*”

In the context of Finland’s six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we may not talk about film director A.J Annila as The New Guru on the Finnish production scene. The success of Annila first feature film in the Middle Empire allows saying however that; Finland succeeded to be remarkably represented by a “New film director – Ambassador”, a success that also benefits to the countries that co produced the film.

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