
UPI taking 'Island' around the world

By Stuart Kemp

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CANNES -- Universal Pictures International, the new-look Universal overseas distribution powerhouse launched in January after the breakup of United International Pictures, has acquired U.K., Spanish, Australian/New Zealand and Latin American rights to the hot Cannes market title "Nim's Island."

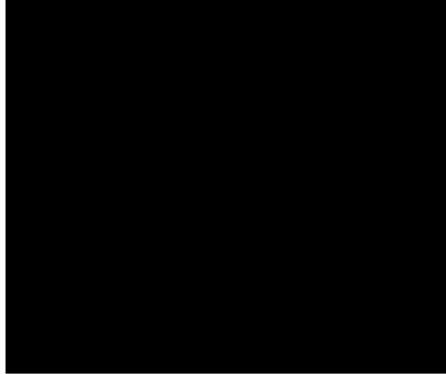
It marks one of the first high-profile, multiterritory deals that UPI has struck since it set up its stalls around the world under the watchful eye of UPI president David Kosse after UIP partner Paramount also struck out on its own in selected territories.

"We think 'Nim's Island' is a great prospect, and it is part of our ongoing efforts (at UPI) to continue to acquire first-class properties that will play across international territories," Kosse said.

The movie -- which stars Jodie Foster, Abigail Breslin and Gerard Butler -- is one of the first productions from the new Fox Walden joint venture that will see 20th Century Fox roll out the title April 25.

Summit is handling international sales on the film. The title is one of the buzz properties at the Marche du Film and was the center of an early bidding war among U.K. buyers, one said in an interview. Paula Mazur is producing the family film.

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The movie is based on Wendy Orr's children's book, with husband-and-wife directing team Jennifer Flackett and Mark Levin set to start shooting in July in Australia from their adapted screenplay.

The story is set on a secret tropical island under threat from tour operators where a young girl named Nim lives with her scientist father. It has been flagged as "Swiss Family Robinson"-meets-"Robinson Crusoe."

When contacted, the parties involved declined comment at press time.

Thursday also saw Summit wow international buyers with a presentation to buyers of Fox Walden's "City of Embers," which will see the set for a dying city built in the same warehouse in Northern Ireland that was used to create the ship for "Titanic."