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The Hollywood Reporter

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Critters clean up

'Madagascar 2' nabs \$64 mil to top frame

By Carl DiOrto

DreamWorks Animation's family comedy "Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa" enjoyed a surfin' safari to the top of the domestic boxoffice this weekend.

The Paramount-distributed animated sequel cruised to an estimated \$63.5 million opening that significantly outdistanced prerelease projections. Its three-day haul outpaced even the four-day bow by the original "Madagascar," which unspooled over the 2005 Memorial Day frame with \$61 million.

Universal's R-rated comedy "Role Models" finished second with a \$19.3 million debut that also comfortably outpaced forecasts. Dimension Films'

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BOND'S BIG BUCKS
\$107 mil
o'seas
See page 10

"Madagascar 2" made \$3.6 million from 131 Imax screens.



Buddy's social work inspires CBS project

By Nellie Andreeva

Michael Rapaport has inked a development deal with CBS.

Under the pact, he will develop, star in and produce an hour-long project for the network. The project will be produced by Denis Leary and Jim Serpico's Apostle Pictures, Sony TV and CBS Paramount TV.

Rapaport

The untitled project, to be written by "Basketball Diaries" scribe Bryan Goluboff, is based on an idea Rapaport has tossed around for four years. It revolves around the lives of social workers in New

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'Captain' Johnston

By Borys Kit

Joe Johnston has inked a deal to direct "First Avenger: Captain America," Marvel Studios' take on its classic comic book character. Marvel's Kevin Feige is producing.

No writers are on board, but the studio, which is hearing pitches, expects to hire shortly.

Johnston first met with Marvel two years ago. When the two parties clicked, general talks turned into Captain America-specific meetings, with much of the project's current direction resulting from those early conversations.

"This is a guy who

designed the vehicles for 'Star Wars,' who storyboarded the convoy action sequence for 'Raiders of the Lost Ark,'" Feige said. "From 'Rocketeer' to 'October Sky' to 'The Wolfman,' you can look at pieces of his movies and see how they lead to this one."

Created in 1941 by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon for Timely Comics, Captain America is the heroic alter ego of Steve Rogers, who is rejected by the Army for being too sickly and undergoes an experiment that takes him to the pinnacle of human form. Paired with

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Ratner: Sword tops next 'Cop'

By Jay A. Fernandez and Borys Kit

Director Brett Ratner is in final negotiations to take on literature's most famous barbarian.

During the past few weeks, Ratner has been considering signing on to direct a 21st century update of "Conan," co-produced by Nu

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Ratner



Ramirez joins another battle

By Leslie Simmons

Edgar Ramirez is continuing his revolutionary ways. The “Che” actor will star in French director Olivier Assayas’ “Ilich: Story of Carlos.” Ramirez will tackle four to five languages for the complex role as the real life “anti-James Bond” who worked for radical Palestinians and groups in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Romania. Film en Stock, Canal Plus and Egoli Tossell are producing the project, which will be released as a feature as well as a three-part TV series. The film centers on the true story of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, a Venezuela-born leftist revolutionary nicknamed Carlos and later Jackal who famously raided the OPEC headquarters in Vienna in 1975. “Carlos” is the reminiscences of the revolutionary, who was manipulated by the secret services of Arabian and Eastern countries and founded a worldwide terrorist organization. He ended up ridiculed



Ramirez

and alone in exile in Sudan before being picked up by French police. Sanchez is serving a life sentence in France.

Assayas said Ramirez was the right fit for the role because the actor hails from the same place as Sanchez and the two share similarities in build, fluency in many languages and their awareness of complex international politics.

Ramirez was, Assayas said, “the obvious choice to portray the most complex and controversial character to emerge from the revolutionary struggles of our time.”

Production is set to begin in January. It will shoot in numerous locations, including France, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Lebanon, Yemen and possibly Sudan.

Ramirez is repped by Endeavor, manager Jill Littman and attorney Bob Wallerstein.

Actors believe in ‘After.Life’

By Gregg Goldstein

SANTA MONICA — Justin Long and Josh Charles are joining Christina Ricci and Liam Neeson in the afterlife.

The pair are heading into Agnieszka Wojtowicz-Vosloo’s psychological thriller “After.Life,” the tale of a young woman (Ricci) caught between life and death and a seemingly helpful funeral director (Neeson) who may be intent on burying her alive.

Long will play her boyfriend, Paul, who becomes increasingly suspicious of foul play. Charles is set for the role as Paul’s friend.

The LLeju Prods./Plum Pictures feature, which begins shooting Tuesday in New York, is produced

by Bill Perkins, Celine Rattray and Brad Gilbert. Plum’s Galt Niederhoffer and Pam Hirsch, Harbor Light Entertainment’s Edwin Marshall and James Swisher and LLeju’s Cooper Richey are executive producing. LLeju head Perkins is financing.

ICM packaged, secured financing and represents North American rights to the project, with IM Global handling foreign AFM sales.

Long, repped by UTA and Principato-Young, will soon be seen in “He’s Just Not That Into You” and “Youth in Revolt.” The Endeavor-repped Charles, now starring on HBO’s “In Treatment,” will next be seen in the David Foster Wallace feature adaptation of “Brief Interviews With Hideous Men.” **THR**



Long



Charles

Marvel picks its ‘Captain’

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an indestructible shield, he became a symbol of the war effort, in and out of comics.

The character disappeared in the 1950s but was revived during the early era of Marvel Comics. He was reintroduced as part of the Avengers, the absence explained by having him being in a state of suspended animation during a war mission until found by the superteam.

Kicking off with “Iron Man,” Marvel Studios’ slate of movies — including “Thor” and the “Iron Man” sequel — is building toward an “Avengers” movie set for release in 2011, in which the characters from the films team for one big adventure. “Captain America” is scheduled for release May 6, 2011.

“Captain America” will be a World War II-set movie, and the character will appear in the modern day-set “Avengers.” Executive producing on “Captain” are Louis D’Esposito, Stan Lee and Marvel Studios chairman David Maisel.

The character’s last live-action appearance was in 1990’s “Captain America,” a cheap production from 21st Century Films that ended up going to straight to video. The movie starred Matt Salinger as the hero, dethawed in modern times to fight his arch-nemesis, the Red Skull.

CAA-repped Johnston’s credits include “Jurassic Park III” and “Hidalgo.” He is in post on Universal’s retelling of “The Wolfman,” starring Benicio Del Toro and Anthony Hopkins. **THR**

Rapaport takes on social work

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York and is inspired by the experiences of a good friend of Rapaport’s who is a social worker in the Big Apple.

“It will deal with the ups and downs and the goods and bads of what social workers do,” Rapaport said. “It’s going to be very touching and emotional, as what these characters do is so tough and gritty, but there also will be a lot of room for humor.”

The blend of drama and comedy and the setting, an ensemble of public-service workers in New York, is reminiscent of Apostle’s trademark series, FX’s “Rescue Me,” which also is co-produced by Sony TV.

Goluboff, Leary and Serpico will

executive produce the CBS project, with Rapaport serving as producer.

Serpico called Rapaport “one of those rare talents who shows a

mastery of both comedic and dramatic acting and has the extraordinary ability to implement both effortlessly.”

Following his recurring role on

NBC’s “My Name Is Earl,” Rapaport co-stars this season on Fox’s “Prison Break.” He is repped by Paradigm and Brillstein Entertainment.

Goluboff, who most recently worked on HBO’s “In Treatment,” is repped by Paradigm. **THR**



Goluboff

Women in Entertainment lineup set

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Rawling on FX’s “The Shield.” She has received 10 Emmy noms and nine Golden Globe noms.

Close also has been honored with a Crystal Award from Women in Film, a GLAAD Media Award, a People’s Choice Award, the National Association of Theatre Owners’ Female Star of the Year

Award and a Gotham Award.

In addition to Lifetime, this year’s breakfast is held in association with Mikimoto. Teleflora also is a participating sponsor.

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