

Hong Kong Directors Still Reign Mainland New Year Cinema

“Monster Hunt 2”, “The Monkey King 3”, “Detective Chinatown 2” and “Operation Red Sea” were the four most high-profile Chinese New Year holiday releases.

Chinese New Year holiday releases had always been dominated by Hong Kong directors. This year was no exception. Among the four titles mentioned above, “Detective Chinatown 2” is the only one helmed by Mainland director Chen Sicheng. “Monster Hunt 2” is directed by Raman Hui. “The Monkey King 3” is the latest member of Cheang Pou-soi's “Monkey King” film series. “Operation Red Sea” is Dante Lam's latest work following the high-grossing commercial success “Operation Mekong” (2016). True that the works of Hui, Cheang and Lam this time are all sequels with seemingly little creativity, which is common not only in Hong Kong, but even Hollywood—a massive interconnected series of superhero film entries and “Star Wars” prequels. Securing decent box office with what appears to be tedious remakes says something about the success Hong Kong directors has been achieving over commercial productions. “Wolf Warrior 2”, the highest-grossing film of all-time in China, was directed by Mainland director Wu Jing, who had developed his career in the Hong Kong cinema.

Whether the chart-topper be “Monster Hunt 2”, “The Monkey King 3” or “Operation Red Sea”; or if “Detective Chinatown 2” sees an unexpected box office win, Hui, Cheang and Lam will jointly account for more than half of the Chinese New Year box office.

The question is whether this wave will continue. Hong Kong directors will have to look out as Chinese directors are catching up in the aspect of commercial films.