

Three Films Banned in China before New Film Bureau in Operation

Bad news has been broached in the film industry before China's new Film Bureau, consolidated under the Publicity Department, goes into official operation.

Chinese horror movie "The Possessed" had been pulled from the release line-up just days before it was set to hit theatres in China on 12 April. On 31 March, Hengye Pictures, one of the studios behind the film, released an apologetic official announcement stating that the film's removal was "due to technical reasons" and that the company decided to "readjust the release date" after discussions with "relevant parties".

The news came as a shock to many since screenings and marketing campaigns had been held in major cities.

"Moonlight" was also recently tipped to screen at the upcoming Beijing International Film Festival in April, but the gay-themed story had been banned just a day before the removal announcement of "The Possessed" was made. The same went for "Farewell My Concubine", supposedly screened in Beijing to remember the late Leslie Cheung 15 years after his passing.

Industry players believe that "Moonlight" and "The Possessed" were examined by the Film Bureau under the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT). The Beijing International Film Festival is a large event through years of organizing work. The opening film "Moonlight" was supposed to have passed the SAPPRFT censorship inspection and confirmed to screen fairly early. Even though "The Possessed" had passed reviews, insiders reveal that a re-examination was requested for some plotlines to be snipped from the original edition. The release day is yet to be announced.

The Palme d'Or winner at the 46th Cannes Film Festival, "Farewell My Concubine" getting banned puzzled many because it was released in Mainland China as early as 1993. The film sparked rave reviews while garnering RMB 48 million at box office (when ticket price was RMB 4 in Mainland China). Even though the first homegrown same-sex romance "Looking for Rohmer" was approved by the SAPPRFT, the judgement may not last.