

Mexico's Gussi, Spain's Lauren Acquire 'Khumba' (EXCLUSIVE)



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Sales surge on Annecy competition player

John Hopewell (<http://variety.com/author/john-hopewell/>)

An elite pack of wide-appeal international toonpics, offering entertaining and immersive entry into distinctive worlds around the globe, are now punching sizeable sales and box office.

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The latest example celebrates its world premiere at France's [Annecy Intl. Animation Festival \(http://variety.com/2012/film/news/annecy-fest-focuses-on-live-events-1118062679/\)](http://variety.com/2012/film/news/annecy-fest-focuses-on-live-events-1118062679/): "Khumba," the second 3D animated feature from South Africa's [Triggerfish Animation Studios \(http://variety.com/2013/film/news/triggerfish-sets-sea-monster-movie-exclusive-1200493414/\)](http://variety.com/2013/film/news/triggerfish-sets-sea-monster-movie-exclusive-1200493414/), Africa's flagship toon studio. The pic, a coming-of-age comedy adventure about a

half-striped zebra's search for a magical watering hole, is voiced by [Jake T. Austin](http://variety.com/2013/tv/reviews/the-fosters-review-1200489286/) (<http://variety.com/2013/tv/reviews/the-fosters-review-1200489286/>), Laurence Fishburne, [Annasophia Robb](http://variety.com/2013/tv/reviews/the-carrie-diaries-1117948979/) (<http://variety.com/2013/tv/reviews/the-carrie-diaries-1117948979/>), Liam Neeson and Steve Buscemi.

Beverly Hills-based Cinema Management Group, which reps the pic in international markets, has closed pre-sales to Mexico (Gussi), Spain (Antonio Llorens' Lauren Films), Malaysia (Suraya Films), Thailand (Mono Films), Taiwan (Creative Century) and Vietnam (IPA).

CMG's international sales roll-out for "Khumba" covers 40 distributor deals, said exec producer and CMG prexy Edward Noeltner.

Helmed by Anthony Silverston, and written by Silverston, Raffaella Delle Donne and "The Lion King" co-scribe Jonathan Roberts, "Khumba" has already pre-sold to Millennium Ent. for North America and to heavyweight distributors in key territories, such as France's Metropolitan, the distrib for DreamWorks and Lionsgate's pics in Gaul, and Russia's Luxor.

"Khumba" sales come as "Adventures in Zambezia 3D," Triggerfish's first animated feature, has grossed \$24.9 million worldwide, with France, where Metropolitan releases Aug. 14, Spain, most of Latin America and China yet to open.

Results make "Zambezia" the highest-grossing South African films since 1985's "The Gods Must Be Crazy."

Standout results include Bazelevs/All Media's \$5.7 million in Russia, \$3 million for Bloomage in South Korea, \$3.3 million in Poland, where "Zambezia" was distributed by kids' specialist Kino Swiat, eOne's \$3.3 million in Benelux and \$2.7 million for Sony Pictures in Australia.

"At a 'Khumba' marketing reception organized by CMG and Triggerfish Animation in Cannes, Kino Swiat and eOne explained the key to their success: Treat the film like a major movie. If you treat it big, the kids will know it's a big event movie and will want to go," Noeltner said.

He also argued that "Zambezia's" setting was a major plus: "One of the taglines

distributors had for the film was 'Zambezia: somewhere between Rio and Madagascar'. I always said, when selling it, that it was the cheapest ticket you could get to Africa and distributors used that in their marketing as well."

Part of "Khumba's" appeal, Noeltner added, is "the warmth of its color and lighting scheme which makes 'Khumba' stand out. What Triggerfish has achieved with both films is that they are culturally distinctive from Pixar, Disney or DreamWorks movies but are technically and visually on the same level."

Noeltner said CMG, which also is selling Canadian Nancy Florence Savard's Inuit adventure "The Legend of Sarila," which screens out of competition at Annecy, is looking to announce "one or two" new animated features for international sales in Toronto.

Silverston, Delle Donne and producer Mike Buckland will talk the audience through development and production of "Khumba" on Wednesday at a Feature Films: 4 Case Studies panel.

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