

Crazy Rich Asians fails to click with Chinese audiences

By Christopher Bodeen

The Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese audiences aren't exactly going nuts over the U.S. box-office hit *Crazy Rich Asians*, despite its all-Asian cast and theme of rising Asian prosperity.

Industry data show the film made just \$1.2 million over the three days of its initial release, far behind local productions in the world's second-largest movie market. That compared with the \$25.6 million grossed by the Chinese crime drama *A Cool Fish*, according to data from analyst Comscore.

Chinese film industry veteran Wei Junzi said the romantic comedy's focus on Southeast Asian culture did not resonate with mainland Chinese, despite the cast's ethnic makeup.

"It's a good genre movie," Wei said. "It's also an interesting comparison with the current China-U.S. relationship. You think you know about China, but in reality you don't."

The film's poor performance in China contrasts sharply with its near-rapturous reception in the Chinese diaspora, especially in the U.S. where it was hailed as the first all-Asian box-office smash.

Critic Shi Hang said Chinese audiences are so used to all-Asian productions that



the casting didn't hold much novelty.

"What the public was excited about abroad was all-Asian faces, but, sorry, we watch all-Asian faces every day so it is less valuable here," Shi said.

The film's over-the-top displays of wealth and entitlement may also have been a turn-off for some viewers in a country where the widening gap between rich and poor rankles many.

"It is understandable in a comedy atmosphere, but it gets harder for me to get into the story," he said.

The Warner Bros.' breakout romantic comedy earned \$173 million in the U.S. and was a box-office hit in Singapore, where it is set. Like most comedies, Jon M. Chu's film hasn't been as much of a sensation elsewhere. It took months to secure a China release date, a delay some attributed to its portrayal of extremely wealthy Chinese Singaporeans at a time when China's ruling Communist Party is cracking down on corruption and displays of crass consumerism.

That time lag may also have enabled

NOT TOO CRAZY. A worker is seen standing underneath a screen advertising the movie *Crazy Rich Asians* at a cinema in Beijing. Chinese audiences aren't exactly going nuts over the U.S. box-office hit *Crazy Rich Asians*, despite its all-Asian cast and theme of rising Asian prosperity. (AP Photo/Fu Ting)

many Chinese viewers to access pirated versions online or through streaming services, diminishing their desire to splash out on theater tickets.

The film's performance in China is potentially worrisome for Warner Bros. Its planned sequel, *China Rich Girlfriend*, is expected to better capitalize on the world's second-largest film market.

Another upcoming film targeting Chinese audiences is a live-action version of Disney's 1998 animated classic *Mulan*, which told the story of a plucky Chinese girl who took her father's place in battling invaders from the north. That film also boasts an almost entirely Chinese cast, led by popular actress Liu Yifei in the title role.

However, Wei said the film's success will be based on how authentic it feels to Chinese audiences.

"Will this be just another movie about Chinese culture, with you Americans' own interpretation?" Wei said.

Associated Press researchers Shanshan Wang and Fu Ting contributed to this report.

Japanese prince wants royals to fund Shinto rite, not public

By Mari Yamaguchi

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's Prince Akishino said that a highly religious ritual that is part of next year's succession ceremonies should be covered privately by the imperial family, questioning the government's decision to use public money.

Emperor Akihito's younger son spoke on the contentious issue in a news conference that was recorded for his 53rd birthday. Akihito plans to abdicate next year and will be succeeded by Crown Prince Naruhito. Akishino would then become first in line of succession.

Akishino said that using public funds on the Daijosai, the first communion the new emperor performs with Shinto gods, is questionable since Japan's Constitution separates religion and state.

The ritual is expected in mid-November next year, and the government has announced that it would cover the cost, following the precedent set at the time of Akihito's succession 30 years ago. The cost for that rite alone was 2.25 billion yen (\$20 million), though the government is expected to spend slightly less next year.

"It's a royal family event, and it is highly religious," Akishino told reporters. "The question is if it is appropriate to use the government funds to cover the cost of such a highly religious event." He said he thinks the ritual held for his father should not have been funded by the government, and he still holds that view.

The government has already decided to follow the previous example, he said. "Personally, I still feel awkward ... I still believe (the ritual) should be covered by the palace budget." He said he conveyed his views about the upcoming event to palace officials, but they "would not

Photos from Japan space rovers show rocky asteroid surface

By Mari Yamaguchi

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's space agency says more than 200 photos taken by two small rovers on an asteroid show no signs of a smooth area for the planned touch down of a spacecraft early next year.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said the two solar-powered rovers have become inactive and are probably in the shade, but are still responding to signals after three months, exceeding their projected life of several days. The Minerva II-1 rovers, which resemble circular cookie tins, were dropped by the unmanned Hayabusa2 spacecraft onto asteroid Ryugu, about 170 million miles from Earth, in September to collect data and surface information.

Many of the photos show a rocky surface on the asteroid, presenting challenges for Hayabusa2's planned touch down, which has already been postponed from late October after initial images showed the surface was rockier than expected.

Continued on page 4

listen to me."

Chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told a regular news conference that there will be no change to the government decision to fund the ritual.

The prince's rare remarks contrary to the government's position topped Japanese newspaper headlines and television talk shows.

Members of the Japanese royal family rarely speak out about their views, in part because the emperor was stripped of political power after Japan's defeat in World War II, which was fought in the name of Akihito's father, Hirohito, when he was revered as god. Hirohito renounced that status and his position has become symbolic under the post-war pacifist constitution.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling party and his government want the emperor to be a more authoritative figure. Abe's government and his ultra-conservative supporters are also campaigning for a constitutional revision that would restore Japan's paternalistic family values and society under the imperial family.



RELIGIOUS CEREMONY. Japan's Prince Akishino, left, and his wife Princess Kiko attend a press conference ahead of his birthday at their residence in Tokyo in late November. Prince Akishino said that a highly religious ritual that is part of next year's succession ceremonies should be covered privately by the imperial family, questioning the government's decision to use public money. (Imperial Household Agency of Japan via AP)

FAVORITE LIGHT CLASSICS WITH NORMAN HUYNH

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2 PM

Norman Huynh, conductor

A light-hearted tour of classical music's most popular hits, including "The Ride of the Valkyries," William Tell Overture, and select movements from Beethoven's beloved symphonies.

Tickets start at \$23



OREGON SYMPHONY™

orsymphony.org
503-228-1353
RACC YOUR OFFICIAL SOURCE FOR SYMPHONY TICKETS

MOVING MUSIC FORWARD