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Hollywood Hopefuls To Debut in Moscow

By Des Brown

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Ben Affleck stars as a man whose wife goes missing in thriller “Gone Girl.”

LONDON — Fall is the time when Hollywood starts to release its big guns, the films they hope will eventually do well in the awards season.

Despite sanctions and talk of banning U.S. films, Moscow cinemas will see an abundance of such films this season as the country remains one of the biggest movie markets in the world with more than a billion dollars worth of tickets sold every year.

The top three films in Russia this year are all from the U.S., with "Transformers: Age of Extinction" topping the box office ranks with $45 million.

One potential prize winner already in Moscow cinemas is David Fincher's "Gone Girl" starring Ben Affleck as a journalist accused of murdering his wife (Rosamund Pike). The Gillian Flynn novel was a best seller in 2012, and the ending has been changed, which should help entice fans of the book into the cinema.

The film is on at 35MM and Pioner in English with Russian subtitles. Most of the films below will also be shown in English.

Later in October, cinemas will get a chance to watch Robert Downey Jr. and Robert Duvall as father and son in "The Judge," a film that Variety called "an engrossing, unwieldy hurricane of a movie." Downey plays a lawyer who has to go back his hometown to defend his father, a judge, on murder charges.

On Oct. 30, "Fury," starring Brad Pitt as a U.S. tank commander in the final months of World War II, opens in Moscow. "Night Crawler," where Jake Gyllenhaal plays an ambulance-chasing freelancer who sells footage of emergencies, accidents and murders to news outlets, also opens that same day. The Guardian called the film "a ghoulish and wickedly funny satire on journalism, the job market and self-help culture."

Also opening then is British thriller "Before I Go to Sleep," based on the best-selling book of the same name by S.J. Watson and starring Nicole Kidman as a woman who wakes up every day with no memory of any of her previous days.

The big release of November is Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar," which follows scientists traveling to another part of the universe via a wormhole to visit new worlds. The cast is top-heavy with Oscar-winning talent including Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway and Sir Michael Caine.

"Foxcatcher," which won Bennett Miller the best director prize at Cannes in May, will will undoubtedly figure prominently in the awards season. A heavily made-up Steve plays 1980s eccentric millionaire John du Pont in a film that looks at his ill-fated relationship with the Shultz brothers, a pair of Olympic wrestlers.

The third instalment in the "Hunger Games" trilogy, "Mockingjay Part 1," with Jennifer Lawrence and the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, opens Nov. 20, and another literary trilogy wraps up Dec. 18 with Bilbo Baggins' journey through Middle Earth coming to an end in "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies."

Also in December, Sir Ridley Scott returns to his favoured genre, the epic, with "Exodus: Gods and Kings," a retelling of Moses story starring Christian Bale. The year will be rounded off by Rob Marshall's anticipated screen adaptation of the 1986 Stephen Sondheim musical "Into the Woods," a retelling of classic fairy tales with a stellar cast including Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt and Johnny Depp.

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