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Hollywood Blocks Film Releases in Russia Over Ukraine Invasion

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Disney Pixar

Major Hollywood film studios said Tuesday that they are suspending theatrical releases in Russia in response to the country's invasion of Ukraine.

"Given the unjustified invasion of Ukraine and the terrible humanitarian crisis, we are suspending film screenings in Russian cinemas," the Walt Disney Company announced.

Pixar's upcoming release "Turning Red" won't be shown in Russian cinemas, Disney said. Disney also said it is halting showings of its current films within Russia.

Sony Pictures will pull its releases from Russian screens starting in April, when Marvel film "Morbius" is set to be released. Warner Bros. Pictures said it has canceled the release of "The Batman" in Russia, where it had been set to premiere on Friday.

"We will make future business decisions based on the evolving situation," Disney said. "In the meantime, given the scale of the emerging refugee crisis, we are working with our NGO

partners to provide urgent aid and other humanitarian assistance."

The major film studios have enjoyed huge success since venturing into Russia in 2006. As of 2021, Russia accounted for $601 million at the box office, or roughly 2.8% of global ticket sales, according to Comscore.

In 2011, Disney held the premiere for its biggest summer release “Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides” in Moscow to flaunt its newly established ties to the Russian film industry.

"We will continue to monitor the situation as it develops," Warner Bros. said in a statement to CNBC. "We look forward to a speedy and peaceful resolution to this tragedy."

The news came as Netflix said it will not comply with Russia's new requirement for it to stream state television broadcasts on its platform.

Over the weekend, the Ukrainian Film Academy called for an international boycott of Russian cinema in light of the invasion.

The West has mobilized to sanction Russia’s financial and economic sectors as well as cultural and sporting spheres, since President Vladimir Putin ordered a “special military operation” in Ukraine, widely viewed as a full-scale invasion.

The Hollywood Reporter reported that studio executives are currently grappling with how to proceed in Russia, with one executive stating: “If the U.S. and its allies want to cut off Russia from the rest of the world, then how would we go ahead and release our movies there?”

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