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Coming Soon: 88

April Mullen and Tim Doiron on the distribution strategy for *88*, the first title to be released from Wango Films' new distribution arm.

By Julianna Cummins

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Coming Soon, an ongoing editorial feature from Playback, highlights the distribution strategies for soon-to-be released Canadian films. Here, we speak to April Mullen and Tim Doiron of Wango Films and Wango Releasing about the distribution strategy for *88*.

The film: *88* follows the story of a young woman named Gwen who comes to her senses in a roadside diner with no recollection of how she got there. The film then weaves between two timelines during Gwen's revenge-filled journey as she tries to find the person responsible for her lover's death. *88* stars Katharine Isabelle, Christopher Lloyd, Jesse McCartney and Michael Ironside.

Production credits: *88* was directed by April Mullen and written by Tim Doiron, and produced via the pair's production shingle Wango Films.

Distribution: *88* is the first film to be released via Wango Films' newly launched distribution arm, Wango Releasing. Juice Worldwide is handling the digital distribution of the film, and Raven Banner will be releasing *88* on DVD and Blu-ray in Canada. Alchemy (formerly Millennium Entertainment) released the film in the U.S. via VOD platforms and DVD/Blu-ray.

Theatrical: The theatrical run for *88* kicks off May 6 as part of the Indie Canadian Film Series event screening initiative, which is run by A71 Entertainment, Landmark Cinemas and MEI Group. As part of this program, *88* will screen in 20 Landmark Cinema locations across Canada on May 6 for one-night-only. A red carpet event and Q & A session with the cast and filmmakers will be held at the May 6 screening in Hamilton.

Following the Indie Canadian Film Series event, a red carpet premiere and Q & A event will also be held for the film's Toronto premiere at Cineplex Cinemas Yonge and Dundas on May 8, and at the Landmark cinema in St. Catharines on May 9. The distributors will also be hosting an *88*-themed after-party for those who attend the premiere screenings. The parties will feature live performances by bands featured on the film's soundtrack, and will be attended by cast and crew. The red carpet events and parties will also include various contests and giveaways.

"A big mandate for us with Wango Releasing is to bridge the gap between Canadian filmmakers and Canadian film lovers. We want to create a community between everybody so we so we demystify the whole process," Dorion told *Playback Daily*. *88* will also have a week-long run starting May 8 at Landmark cinemas in Kanata, ON and Vancouver, B.C.

Marketing: *88* has been promoted at a number of Fan Expo and **ComiCon** events around Canada ahead of its theatrical release to reach the films' core target demo of genre fans. For example, at the Toronto ComiCon, Dorion signed posters and participated in a Q & A session. The event also featured a screening of the *88* trailer and some behind-the-scenes content. The team is also focusing heavily on a social media marketing campaign that includes merch giveaways, and securing media opportunities for cast and crew. "We go directly to the press, and we go directly to our audience," Mullen said.

Target audience: The target audience for *88* are men and women age 21 to 42, especially genre fans who would appreciate the unique storytelling structure deployed in *88* (Mullen describes it as "*Kill Bill* meets *Memento*.") However, the diverse cast also broadens the commercial appeal of the film, Mullen said. "Christopher Lloyd attracts older fanboy/genre people, whereas Katie is attracting younger sci-fi audience members. Jesse McCarthy is a pop star sensation, and he is going to attract much younger, fresher people," Mullen said.

Additional windows: Following its theatrical run, the film will be released on various digital platforms via Juice International, and on DVD and Blu-ray via Raven Banner on June 15.

What makes this film unique? The structure of the film transitions between two timelines where lead actress Katherine Isabelle portrays two very different characters, Mullen said: a victim on the run, and a bloodthirsty killer. In addition to the structure and style of *88*, Mullen points to Lloyd's performance as a defining element of the film. "It is Christopher Lloyd as you have never seen him before. He is a dark, menacing, impulsive, dangerous man. His performance is very, very subtle. It is so exciting to see him in a role like that," Mullen said.

Budget/financing: *88* received financing from Telefilm Canada, the OMDC, a pre-sale of international rights to New Image, and provincial and federal tax credits. The filmmakers declined to provide details on the budget, but Mullen said it was "modest" for an action/thriller feature.



TAGS:

April Mullen, Christopher Lloyd, Jesse McCartney, Katharine Isabelle, Michael Ironside, Tim Doiron, Wango Films, Wango Releasing

