JULY 28, 2016
8:57am PT by Borys Kit

'The Rocketeer' Reboot in the Works From Disney (Exclusive)

The poster for 1991's 'The Rocketeer' Photofest

The project, in the early development stages, is being looked at as a sequel-reboot and will be headlined by a black female character.

The Rocketeer is ready to blast off once again.

Walt Disney Studios is developing a reboot of the 1991 action-adventure movie, hiring Max Winkler and Matt Spicer to pen the script, which is being titled *The Rocketeers.*

The project, in the early development stages, is considered a sequel-reboot and, in a modern-day twist, will be headlined by a black female character.

Brigham Taylor, who produced *The Jungle Book* with Jon Favreau, is producing along with Blake Griffin of the NBA's Los Angeles Clippers and Ryan Kalil of the NFL's Carolina Panthers. Griffin and Kalil are partners in a new venture called Mortal Media and approached Taylor with the idea for the reboot.

The Rocketeer was based on the popular 1980s indie comic by Dave Stevens and, like *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, was a loving homage to the serials of the 1930s and 1940s.

The story followed Cliff Secord, a stunt pilot who discovers a rocket pack and suit to die for and becomes embroiled with mobsters and Nazis, as well as Howard Hughes and the FBI.

The Joe Johnston-directed movie starred Billy Campbell as Secord, Jennifer Connelly as his aspiring actress (a Betty Page homage) girlfriend, Timothy Dalton as an Errol Flynn-type actor who is a Nazi spy and Alan Arkin as Secord's mechanic.

When the pic was released, it grossed only $46.6 million and came in fourth in its opening weekend (it was pummeled by *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *City Slickers* and *Dying Young*). Its performance was considered a disappointment by the studio and its creative team.

But a rare thing happened: The film took on a life of its own, engendering a massive following who loved its un-ironic, bright and straightforwardly heroic take on its characters, all abetted by a score by James Horner.

When Disney hosted a 20th anniversary screening of the movie at Hollywood's El Capitan Theatre in 2011, fans — many in Rocketeer costumes — lined up for blocks.

It was around that time that the studio began mulling a reboot of the movie, but sources said it sought a way to differentiate it from another rocket-propelled flying hero: *Iron Man*.

The new take keeps the story in a period setting and offers a fresh view on the characters. Set six years after the original Rocketeer and after Secord has vanished while fighting the Nazis, an unlikely new hero emerges: a young African-American female pilot, who takes up the mantle of Rocketeer in an attempt to stop an ambitious and corrupt rocket scientist from stealing jet-pack technology in what could prove to be a turning point in the Cold War.

Tendo Nagenda and Chaz Salembier are overseeing the project for Disney.

Winkler, the son of *Happy Days* actor Henry Winkler, wrote and directed the 2010 indie comedy *Ceremony* starring Michael Angarano and Uma Thurman. He also has helmed episodes of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and *New Girl.*

Spicer is Winkler's producing and writing partner. The two have a coming-of-age drama titled *Flower*, with Zoey Deutch and Adam Scott, in postproduction, which Winkler directed. They also wrote *Magic Camp* for Disney and *The Adventurer's Handbook* for Focus.

The duo are repped by CAA, Management 360 and Jackoway Tyerman.

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