

## **Godzilla stomping back to theaters via Legendary**

By Ace Fernandez

Well, well, well ... look who's getting back in fighting shape.

Everyone's favorite gigantic, havoc-wreaking lizard, Godzilla, is on his way back to the big screen via Legendary Pictures, which has acquired the rights to develop and produce a new feature based on the iconic Toho Co. character. Warner Bros. will co-produce, co-finance and distribute through its deal with Legendary, and Toho will roll out the film in Japan.

Dan Lin, Roy Lee and Brian Rogers are also producing; Yoshimitsu Banno, Kenji Okuhira and Doug Davison will be executive producers on the project. The last major Godzilla outing, an American, New York-set version from Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, grossed \$376 million worldwide in 1998 despite fielding equally major criticism. Toho quickly produced "Godzilla 2000," in which the big beast took on an evil UFO, the following year.



But the Godzilla franchise juggernaut has survived decades of permutations (he first appeared in 1954), dozens of films, books, video games and merchandising tie-ins and seems perpetually ready to rear up again for new audiences.

The new film is shooting for a 2012 release.

"Godzilla is one of the world's most powerful pop culture icons, and we at Legendary are thrilled to be able to create a modern epic based on this long-loved Toho franchise," said Thomas Tull, chairman and CEO of Legendary. "Our plans are to produce the Godzilla that we, as fans, would want to see. We intend to do justice to those essential elements that have allowed this character to remain as pop culturally relevant for as long as it has."

Added Jeff Robinov, president of Warner Bros. Pictures Group, "Godzilla is emblematic of the kind of branded, event films for which Warner Bros. and our partners at Legendary are best known."

The two companies have partnered on such global properties as "Batman Begins," "The

Dark Knight," "Superman Returns" and "The Hangover," which have grossed more than \$2 billion worldwide. Together, they have a remake of "Clash of the Titans" stomping into theaters Friday.