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WB cops 'Gangster Squad'

Lin to produce film based on L.A. Times series

By TATIANA SIEGEL

Warner Bros. has acquired rights to the L.A. Times' recent seven-part series "Tales From the Gangster Squad," with Dan Lin to produce the feature adaptation.

In 1946, in a chaotic and corrupt Los Angeles, gangsters brazenly engaged in shootouts and drive-by shootings. At the time, the LAPD formed what was dubbed the Gangster Squad to keep East Coast Mafia out of the city. The squad's anything goes approach lasted through the 1950s.

Paul Lieberman penned the series of articles that concluded in Saturday's paper.

Lieberman began working on the series back in 1992, when he received a call from a reader who said a piece about the LAPD's Organized Crime Intelligence Division had failed to mention its roots in a unit formed after WWII, the Gangster Squad. When asked by Lieberman how he knew, the man said, "Well, I was on it."

Within days, Lieberman was in the San Gabriel Valley living room of long-retired Sgt. Jack O'Mara. Over time, he tracked down nine other squad members. One, the unit's first bug man, shared what he knew only after a decade of Lieberman's persistent querying.

More than 100 people involved with the squad were interviewed for the series, including attorneys for L.A. mobsters Bugsy Siegel and Mickey Cohen and two former members of Cohen's entourage, one of whom was present on the night Jack "the Enforcer" Whalen was shot. In addition, Whalen's surviving relatives, including his 91-year-old sister, agreed to be interviewed for the series.

The articles focus on two cops -- one a member of the Gangster Squad and one forced out against his will -- who were both obsessed with taking down Cohen.

Warners and Lin are out to screenwriters to adapt the material.

Lin Pictures' Jon Silk will serve as co-producer.

Lin, a former Warners exec who oversaw the development and production of "The Departed," is in production on the Robert Downey Jr. starrer "Sherlock Holmes." He is in post-production on "Terminator Salvation," Robert Rodriguez's "Shorts," Ricky Gervais and Matt Robinson's "This Side of the Truth" and Richard Kelly's "The Box." Lin Pictures also has "Justice League" and "The Karma Coalition" at the studio.