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Warner Bros. plays 'Polo' Historical epic to feature Damon as explorer

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By MICHAEL FLEMING

"Kingdom of Heaven" scribe William Monahan will turn his attention from the 12th century Crusades to the 13th century Far East explorations of Marco Polo.

Monahan has been set by Warner Bros. to write "Marco Polo," a historical epic based on Polo's autobiography "Travels" that will be a star vehicle for Matt Damon.

Pic will be produced by "Ocean's Twelve" scribe George Nolfi and Michael Hackett. It is the first producing project for Nolfi and Hackett since their Gambit Pictures was staked to a first-look deal at WB.

Nolfi and Hackett came up with the idea for the film, and quickly hooked Monahan and Damon.

A deal is being negotiated for Damon to play Polo, who ventured farther into Asia than any Westerner before him. His journey took 24 years, during which Polo became a confidante of Kublai Khan and witness to many technological advances of China and Mongolia. WB exec veep Lynn Harris and Jess Rosenthal will oversee the pic. Along with Polo's memoirs, the studio has acquired a book proposal by Laurence Bergreen.

Monahan wrote "Tripoli," the story of how U.S. soldier William Eaton joined forces with an exiled king to overthrow the corrupt ruler of what is now Libya. Ridley Scott agreed to direct, but after budget and logistical complications, Scott instead turned his attention to the Crusades. Scott hired Monahan to write "Kingdom of Heaven," which 20th Century Fox bows Friday.

Monahan is adapting the Cormac McCarthy novel "Blood Meridian" for Scott to direct, with Scott Rudin producing. The project is one that Rudin might bring to Disney when he switches his first-look deal from Paramount to that studio.

Damon has wrapped "The Brothers Grimm" and

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Damon

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"Syriana" and will next star in "The Departed" for WB, and will follow with the [Robert De Niro](#)-directed "The Good Shepherd."

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He is also expected to reprise the lead role as Jason Bourne in "The Bourne Ultimatum."  
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2	<a href="#">The Interpreter</a>	\$14.2	7	<a href="#">Fever Pitch</a>	\$3.8
3	<a href="#">XXX: State of the Union</a>	\$13.7	7	<a href="#">Kung Fu Hustle</a>	\$3.8
4	<a href="#">The Amityville Horror</a>	\$8.1	9	<a href="#">Robots</a>	\$2.7
5	<a href="#">Sahara</a>	\$6.0	10	<a href="#">Guess Who</a>	\$2.2

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