

Ping-Pong Diplomacy Inspires American-Chinese Co-Production (Exclusive)

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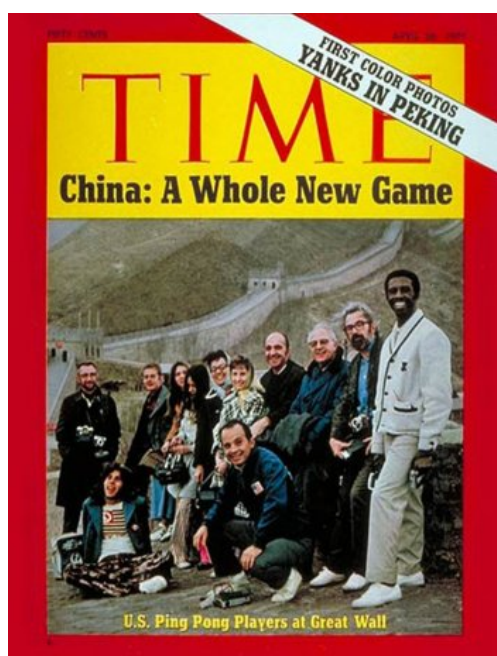


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Courtesy Daryl Marshak and Andrew Sugerman
 The historic match was captured on a 1971 Time Magazine cover

A \$40 million film titled 'Let it Be' is planned

Forty-three years ago, a Ping-Pong match between American and Chinese players in Japan led to a diplomatic breakthrough between the U.S. and China. It resulted in a historic 1972 meeting between then-President **Richard Nixon** and Chinese leader **Mao Zedong** that changed world history.

What came to be called “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” led to the normalization of U.S.-China relations for the first time since World War II, and is at the heart of a planned \$40 million movie called *Let It Be*.

The producers, who have been working on the project since 2009, have acquired the life rights to the two athletes central to the story – **Zhuang Zedong** of China and **Glenn Cowan** of the U.S.

– from their estates.

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They also have a screenplay by **Richard Friedenberg**, an Oscar nominee for his screenplay of *A River Runs Through It*; and an Emmy winner for the screenplay of the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie *Promise*.

“It’s a great buddy story,” says producer **Andrew Sugerman**. “It’s *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* on a certain level. It’s the collision of two very different lives.”

The story is a personal one with the politics and the opening up of China to America as the background.

While it made history, the movie will be a more personal story of how Zedong and Cowan, who was seen as a hippie of the era, improbably became friends as well as competitors.



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Above: Zhuang Zedong and Glenn Cowan in 1971 with the silk scarf given as a gift to the American

The producers were able to conduct interviews with Zhuang in China shortly before he died in 2013. Cowan died in 2004.

The producers, in addition to Andrew Sugerman, are **Joan Sugerman**, **Darryl Marshak** and **Susan Zachary**.

Andrew Sugerman's credits include *Shopgirl*, *Premonition* and *Conviction*. Marshak is a personal manager and producer whose credits include *Cataclysm* and *Dracula Sucks*.

Let It Be is planned as a co-production between the producers and the Chinese company USCBS, with financing by a group of international and Chinese investors, led by **Rose Wang**, CEO of Biinary Group.

The U.S.-Chinese co-production is scheduled to shoot in 2015 in China, Japan and the U.S.

The title comes from a Beatles song, but is part of the movie because after Zhuang gave Cowan a silk scarf as a gift, Cowan gave Zhuang a TV shirt that said *Let It Be* and had an American flag on the front.

"The gift is thematic because a lot of what their relationship was about was peach through humanity and not peace through politics," says Andrew Sugerman. "They didn't care about political bans on their talking to each other. They only cared that they liked each other."

There is no distribution set yet for the project.

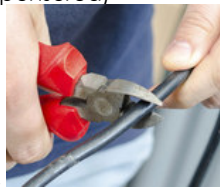
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