

# MAN ON A MISSION

At a Beijing event for *Mission: Impossible – Fallout*, co-stars Henry Cavill and Simon Pegg reveal the death-defying lengths that Tom Cruise went to in a bid to thrill the film's audiences, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

Accompanied by the pulsating theme tune of the film and the cheering of fervent fans, the stars of *Mission: Impossible – Fallout* — Tom Cruise, Simon Pegg, Henry Cavill and director Christopher McQuarrie — strode down the stairs of the Imperial Ancestral Temple of the Forbidden City in Beijing on Aug 29.

As if blurring the boundary between the film and reality, the director and actors appeared on the red carpet in China and talked about the challenging yet stimulating filmmaking process.

This year sees the sixth installment of the action-packed franchise, which debuted in China on Aug 31. Since its world premiere on July 12, and as of Sept 4, the film had reaped a global box office of \$649.10 million.

Within five days of its China release, the cumulative box office of the film had totaled 599.75 million yuan (\$87.94 million), with the potential to become the highest-grossing movie in the series.

With a running time of 147 minutes, this installment is, so far, the longest of the series, providing a medley of spine-tingling stunts, including leaping between rooftops and a helicopter dogfight.

As usual, Cruise — reprising his role as errant IMF agent Ethan Hunt — performed all of his stunts himself and *Fallout* features the actor performing the first known on-camera HALO jump (high altitude, low opening), a skydiving technique used largely in military operations to avoid detection and covertly deploy personnel and supplies.

According to McQuarrie, not only did Cruise have to jump from 25,000 feet (7,625 meters), but due to the special requirements of the lighting, there were only three minutes in the day that were appropriate for shooting the scene. In the end, it took Cruise and the camera crew over 106 jumps to finish filming the sky diving sequence.

"It's very complex," says Cruise. "We had to teach the camera operator how to shoot the movie. The guy is an incredible camera operator and photographer who films sky diving, but not the kind of storytelling that we have in this movie — and it looks like it's all one take. Originally, it was designed to be six different shots, but we managed to get it done in three."

The same level of exertion went to the helicopter scene, for which Cruise had to acquire a helicopter pilot's license, due to his insistence for performing the stunt without the help of computer-generated imagery or body doubles.

Cruise got his license within 12 days. However, to become an experienced pilot, he was required to train around the clock.

"I studied the book beforehand, and I went in for 12 days and got my license. Then I trained for a year and a half afterward to get my ratings and to fly aerobatics," Cruise says.

The filming process was so risky that the film crew was constantly worried about the actor's safety.

"We experienced a degree of tension that even the audience don't get," Pegg adds. "Because, when you watch the film, you know that Tom's OK, because you saw him on the red carpet and doing interviews. When you're making the film, however, you don't know if he's gonna make it."

In fact, Cruise suffered a broken ankle while filming a scene by smashing into the side of a building when jumping between rooftops — adding to the long list of injuries he has sustained over the course of making the six-movie series.

Cavill, who was involved in several fight scenes with Cruise, remarks: "It always impresses me how professional Tom is, even when he had his broken ankle. He was constantly saying we go one hundred percent."

Cruise's professional dedication toward his craft remains a major factor in the support for the *Mission: Impossible* series from Chinese moviegoers. Numerous commentators on Sina Weibo have commended the actor's effort, including a user named Xiayanshi who observes, "Tom is so strenuous and devoted". Sophie Fadaizhong points out, "Tom is a true actor willing to risk his life and is worthy of our love."

He Yan, a cultural critic with over 3 million Weibo followers, says: "Viewers like us are so lucky to have these kinds of actors at our age. Despite the increasing use of the visual effects technique green screen, there are still successful and famous actors who are willing to perform the stunts by themselves. It shows a kind of nostalgic respect for films."

To express their love and support for the series and the actors, fans from around the country submitted videos to be shown at the *Fallout's* promotional event. The compilation of short videos showcased fans participating in extreme sports, performing magic tricks and sending their best wishes for the success of the movie.

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*Mission: Impossible – Fallout*, starring Tom Cruise and Rebecca Ferguson, premieres in Chinese cinemas on Aug 31. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: Tom Cruise, Simon Pegg, director Christopher McQuarrie and Henry Cavill at a promotional event in Beijing on Aug 29. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## Maker of new film on Peking Opera targets younger audience

By XU FAN  
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When Peking Opera piece *Cao Cao and Yang Xiu* premiered at Tianjin People's Theater in 1988, it caused a sensation, thanks to top artists Shang Changrong and Yan Xingpeng's engaging performances.

But those who did not see that play have a chance to do so now, as Shang, 79, the first winner of Plum Performance Big Award, China's top honor for stage opera artists, and Yan, 65, who is settled in the United States, have reprised their roles for the big screen.

The 3D panoramic sound film, with the same title as the opera, opened across China on Aug 30 with English subtitles.

The opera is based on a story from the 14th century novel *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* and is about the conflicts between Cao, a suspicious warlord, and his strategist Yang. And in the story, Yang is executed by Cao.

The movie, which was first

screened at the 21st Shanghai International Film Festival in June, received lots of praise, including from actors Pu Cunxin and Hu Ge.

The film is more than the re-enacting of a stage show as the 3D format provides an immersive effect.

In the first sequences of the movie where you see Cao's forces, viewers wearing 3D glasses can see weapons hurtling toward them.

For director Teng Junjie, a veteran who directed the opening and closing ceremonies of the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, *Cao Cao and Yang Xiu* is his third effort at cinematically remaking classic Peking Opera pieces.

Teng's *Farewell My Concubine: The Peking Opera*, the first film in China to capture the centuries-old art form using 3D photography, won the Golden Lumiere Award in Los Angeles in 2015.

"I felt thrilled to receive the honor. James Cameron's *Avatar* and Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* took home the same awards,"



Peking Opera artists Shang Changrong (right) and Yan Xingpeng reprise their roles in the movie version of *Cao Cao and Yang Xiu*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Teng says.

*Farewell My Concubine* made its overseas debut at the Dolby Theater in Hollywood on May 30, 2014, attracting

more than 1,100 viewers, including around 50 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

"The theater is known for

hosting the Oscars' ceremonies. I was so excited to see my first Peking Opera film welcomed there," says Teng.

In the following two years,

“  
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Teng Junjie, director

*Farewell My Concubine* toured more than 10 countries and regions, including France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Italy.

The film is about a warlord who would rather commit suicide than surrender.

Asked about what motivated him to make his latest film, Teng, who is also a visiting

professor at the Communication University of China in Beijing and Tongji University in Shanghai, says it was the responses of his students.

When asked what would make them want to see Peking Opera — one of China's best-known performing arts, which has struggled to gain audiences in recent decades — they said they would be willing to watch films where they can see the actors' emotion and gestures.

With a budget of around 7.5 million yuan (\$1.1 million), the crew shot the film in 3D and 2D versions as well as a 75-minute documentary about the production.

More than 1,700 cinemas, or nearly 18 percent of the country's total of 9,500 theaters, are scheduled to release the movie, an unprecedented scale for a stage opera movie.

"The figure is very encouraging. We hope the film will not only raise interest domestically, but also teach foreigners about Peking Opera," says Teng.