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Vivendi acquires 'New York' rights
By Gregg Kilday

Marking its first acquisition as it branches out into theatrical distribution, Vivendi Entertainment has partnered with Palm Pictures to acquire U.S. theatrical and home video rights to "New York, I Love You," the starry anthology of 12 short films that is filming in New York.

A unit of the Universal Music Group, Los Angeles-based Vivendi is an established player in DVD distribution, where it's had a three-year relationship with Palm. The two will work together on "New York's" domestic rollout, with Vivendi taking the lead.

Vivendi, with its new distribution team is headed by Mike Doban, expects to have its first titles in the market by the end of the year and expects "New York" to be released in the first quarter of 2009.

The movie takes its cue from 2006's "Paris, je t'aime." That film's producer, Emmanuel Benbihy, is among the producers of the new feature, which looks at various aspects of love throughout New York's five boroughs.

Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson are making their directorial debuts on the project, which also includes such helmers as Allen Hughes and Brett Ratner.

The cast includes Kevin Bacon, Orlando Bloom, James Caan, Hayden Christensen, Julie Christie, Chris Cooper, Ethan Hawke and Shia LaBeouf.

The deal was announced Tuesday by Vivendi president Tom O'Malley and Palm's managing partners Jan Korbelin and Marina Grasic, with Grasic also serving as a producer on the film.