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Vivendi, Palm fall for 'New York'

Duo secures U.S. rights to 'I Love You'
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Vivendi Entertainment and Palm Pictures have secured U.S. rights to "New York, I Love You," the ensemble collection of 12 short films currently in production in Manhattan. Pic is produced by Emmanuel Benbihy and Marina Grasic.

The companies plan to release the film early next year. Shooting is almost two-thirds complete.

Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson make their helming debuts on two of the shorts, all of which are love stories of various kinds. Among helmers onboard are Brett Ratner and Fatih Akin, and the cast already includes Kevin Bacon, Orlando Bloom, Julie Christie, Chris Cooper and Shia LaBeouf.

Theme pic follows Benbihy's subtitled "Paris, je t'aime," which grossed a surprising \$4.9 million domestically last year. The concept of revolving stories centered on a specific city will be further developed, with versions based in Asia, South America and Africa planned.

For Vivendi Entertainment, the pic reps a new chapter. Formerly known as Vivendi Visual Entertainment and no relation to the conglom that owns 20% of NBC Universal, the company is an established player in the DVD space. It recently announced an expansion into theatrical releasing with plans to partner with filmmakers to distribute a slate of eight to 14 films per year.

Vivendi and Palm, of which Grasic is a managing partner, have had a DVD distribution deal for three years.