

Posted: Tue., Mar. 13, 2007, 4:32pm PT

Universal has faith in Best Buy

Studio pacts with retail giant for 'Warrior's' promo

By DIANE GARRETT



"Peaceful Warrior's" centers on an athlete's mystical experience after suffering a debilitating injury.

Universal isn't relying on faith alone for "Peaceful Warrior's" return to the bigscreen.

The studio decided to plow the bulk of its marketing campaign into a \$15 million ticket giveaway designed to build word of mouth among fans of the bestselling inspirational tome, "Way of the Peaceful Warrior," and beyond. Its partner? Not church or New Age groups, but ubiquitous electronics chain Best Buy.

Universal prexy Adam Fogelson said the promo will give filmmakers the chance to reach the broad audience they believe will respond to the pic, first released by Lionsgate last summer in a limited way.

"Traditional marketing tactics will work for the majority of films, but there are going to be some films that are not going to work with them," Fogelson said. "This film, in my opinion, cannot be reduced to a 30-second spot."

The pic, like Dan Millman's semi-autobiographical novel, centers on an athlete's mystical experience after suffering a debilitating injury. Directed by Victor Salva, it features Nick Nolte as Socrates, a mysterious stranger with the power to tap into strength and understanding. It was produced by Mark Amin, Cami Winikoff, Robin Schorr and David Welch. Released in theaters in limited markets last summer, it grossed \$1.1 million at the box office.

The Best Buy promo, which runs Sunday through April 1, gives customers up to 10 tickets to the film through the chain's Web site. The pic returns to theaters March 30.

Although other studios have done limited ticket giveaways -- earlier this year, teachers were able to see Hilary Swank's "Freedom Writer" free for a week -- this promo is noteworthy for its focus. Aside from limited advertising and administrative costs, the lion's share of the marketing coin will go toward the free ducats.

"This is a manageable way to give people a sampling of the film and take it where it's going to go," Fogelson said.