

Chinese casting for new film

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Casting for the extras took place in the Novotel Hotel in Hammersmith, West London – and nearly 2,000 people of Chinese heritage turned up, hoping for a part in the Hollywood blockbuster.

I was a professional actor in Australia for a year, appearing in the stage production of The World of Suzie Wong and so I joined the queues of film hopefuls.

The film being shot mainly in studios and locations near London is called 47 Ronin, a true story from the year 1701 about a band of fearless and honourable samurai who set out to avenge the death of their Master.

Chinese from all walks of life went to the open casting in London, where their measurements and photographs were taken, together with other personal particulars. There were students, professionals young and old – and others just with stars in their eyes.

“This could be my big chance. I have always dreamed of becoming a Hollywood actor,” an optimistic engineering student from the University of London told me.

“I’m here for the experience. I love going to movies and this is a chance to see how they are made,” said an enthusiastic chef from Gerrard Street, Chinatown.

“I want to meet Keanu. He is so slim and handsome. And he’s not married,” a tall and pretty fashion design student confessed.

As for me, I thought that going along to the casting would provide a good story for DimSum.

David, a senior casting director, told us: “Extras are a very important part of the film. Without you, there cannot be a movie.

“We will contact those who are successful once we go through all the applications.

“Shooting will take place this year, probably between April and July.

“There will be no need to give up your jobs or your studies. We will talk to you to fix up suitable times to take part in the films.”

The extras will be used in battle scenes and anybody with martial arts, sword fighting and horse riding skills will have a good chance of winning a part.

But many other extras will be needed, for street and village scenes.

People aged from 16 to 90 will be chosen to take part.

How did the film hopefuls know to attend the casting?

Messages were put on Facebook, Twitter, and sent out by university and school web sites and film-related groups such as Chinatown Arts Space.

The fact that Keanu Reeves is starring in 47 Ronin undoubtedly attracted many to the casting. He is the star of the immensely-popular fantasy Matrix film series and the hit, runaway-bus thriller, Speed.

Many DimSum readers may not know that he is a one-quarter Chinese. He also has English and Hawaiian genes. Keanu in Hawaiian means "Cool breeze over the mountains" – that's what Hollywood publicists say, anyway.

Keanu recently appeared on The Graham Norton Show on BBC and other TV shows.

But it's his appearance as the epic hero warrior in 47 Ronin that we all will be looking forward to seeing.

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