

Deal Expands Chinese Influence on Hollywood

By MICHAEL CIEPLY

LOS ANGELES — The Wanda Group, a Chinese conglomerate with extensive interests in the entertainment business, has agreed to acquire AMC Entertainment, North America's second-largest movie theater owner, in a deal that is valued at \$2.6 billion, including roughly \$2 billion in assumed debt, the companies said Sunday.

The acquisition creates the world's largest theater group, the companies said. It also represents a significant expansion of Chinese influence in the American film industry. The industry has long looked to China for growth.

Both companies have been aggressively expanding their numbers of large-screen Imax theaters, which command premium ticket prices that have significantly increased the take for fantasy- and effects-driven films like “Marvel’s The Avengers.” “The Avengers” has taken in about \$1.2 billion around the world since its release by Disney, starting with a number of foreign markets last month. The Imax factor is particularly important in China, which recently expanded its cinema market to include Imax theaters, but requires that the added films be in a 3-D or Imax format.