《跟着习大大看美国：说说浪漫的西雅图》

Seattleis rarely the first US city that comes to Chinese minds. Infact, few people could probably tell Washington state fromWashington DC.

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Two romantic comedy films have irrevocably shaped the imageof Xiyatu, as the city is known in Mandarin, among the Chinesepublic, and as a result it would not be a stretch to say Seattle is seen as the American capital ofromance, somewhat akin to how the world perceives Paris.

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In Sleepless in Seattle, Nora Ephron's 1993 runaway hit, Tom Hanks' character, Sam, moves withhis young son from Chicago to Seattle for a fresh start after the death of his wife. The movieportrays the largest city in the Pacific Northwest not as a canyon of high-rises, but as a bohemianenclave of artists and designers, which possibly did not impress Chinese at the time.

???•???1993????????????????????(??•????)??

This image may have been altered recently by the screen adaptation of Fifty Shades of Grey, whichis largely set in the Seattle area and includes frequent aerial shots and the less-than-tastefulflaunting of wealth and kinky sex.

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The narrative setup in Sleepless is almost Chinese to the core: Sam and Annie, played by MegRyan, fall in love before actually meeting each other in the flesh. Imagine all those Chinese couplesin arranged marriages who were denied the right to face-to-face encounters before their weddingnight. This story could have been their silver lining and inspiration.

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By contrast, the Chinese movie Finding Mr. Right- the title in Mandarin translates as Beijing MeetsSeattle - is very Hollywood in its dramatic arc. The 2013 sleeper hit employs the opposites-attractstrategy: Boy meets girl and nothing works out, but we know they'll end up together becausewe've been conditioned by the genre.

?????????????????(Finding Mr. Right)??????????????2013??

Like with Sleepless, the boy and girl in this story are no youngsters in puppy love. Frank, playedby Wu Xiubo, is

similar to Sam in that he has a child from a previous marriage, but Tang Wei'sJiajia has nothing in common with Annie. She is a gold digger who is in Seattle to give birth to achild by her wealthy, married boyfriend. The father, who remains unseen, is a symbol of thenouveau riche, whose opulent residence stands in sharp contrast to middle-class living in theEmerald City.

??(Frank)????????????????;??

For financial reasons, the movie was actually shot in Vancouver, while the generic English titledoes not even hint at the promotional power of a movie that made 500 million yuan ($78 million)at the box office in China.

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The movie Finding Mr. Right is predominantly set in Seattle and even references Ephron's classicwhen the female protagonist is questioned by a US immigration officer who waves her in asanother Sleepless pilgrim.

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The movie, also written and directed by a woman, is neither a remake nor a sequel to the 1993classic, but it pays almost slavish homage by setting the final scene in New York's Empire StateBuilding. If I were the mayor of Seattle, I would have persuaded director Xue Xiaolu to change thelocation to the Space Needle, which would have cemented the city's reputation as a magnet fortrue love.

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It may not have been necessary anyway. There was reportedly a spike in the number of Chinesetourists in Seattle after the movie was released, and that enthusiasm is unlikely to abate anytimesoon, with a sequel on the way next year.

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