

READY BY EARLY 2010

Film studios, digital-media hub launched at Faure

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THE R430 million Cape Town Film Studios launched yesterday at Faure near Stellenbosch will become Africa's leading digital-media hub and telecommunications centre. It will link with studios in North America, Europe and Asia via broadband highways.

It will also contribute to the R2.5 billion generated annually in the province by the film industry.

Marcel Golding, chief executive officer of e.tv and a major shareholder in Cape Town Film Studios (CTFS), said: "It has taken a long time to get where we are today, but I believe it was worth the wait. We are now able to integrate the latest technology into the CTFS and to explore the possibilities offered to us by an ever changing digital world."

CTFS, formerly known as Dreamworld, was expected to be ready by 2005, but various factors, including funding complications and concerns about the environmental impact of the project, delayed the project.

The studios were renamed this year and former chief executive of Table Mountain Motion Picture Studios Nico Dekker was appointed the new head of the CTFS.

Dekker said the first phase, which will comprise four studios, two workshops and a production house, will be ready by early 2010. The whole project is expected to take 10 years to complete.

Speaking at the launch, Dekker said: "International film experts agree that South Africa should be able to produce at least 30 to 40 feature films a year. We are standing on the soil that already holds all the pictures and scripts for those future films." He said there was significant interest from local and international film companies wanting to use the studios.

Hundreds of people from the film industry braved the heat and dust of the construction site to celebrate the launch of the studios. Mayor Helen Zille, Finance MEC Garth Strachan and mayoral committee member for economic development Mansoor Mohammed were among the dignitaries present. Former premier Ebrahim Rasool, who has backed the project since it was mooted in 2003, also attended.

Chief executive officer of Videovision Entertainment Anant Singh, a major shareholder in CTFS, said CTFS would be the first high-end, custom-built Hollywood-style studio complex in Africa.

Dekker said 100 hectares of the 200ha site would remain undeveloped to protect the area's wetlands. Of the 100ha that will be developed, 30% will be for residential, commercial and retail developments. The remaining land will be for the studios. The site will, in subsequent development phases, be transformed into a film village, with a residential area, hotel, shops and businesses.

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