

Hollywood comes to SA

R400m studio gets set to shoot its first movie

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Four huge sound stages, floors that can stand the weight of water five metres deep, overhead steel structures that can carry 300 tons of equipment with ease ... get ready for "the first film complex in Africa, in pure Hollywood style".

That's how the Cape Town Film Studio is described by Nico Dekker, executive officer of Africa's first modern high-technology film complex, opening in October and built at a cost of R400 million.

Headed by film producer Anant Singh and businessman Marcel Golding, this modern complex has been built on 200 hectares and accommodates sound studios, workshops and production offices.

Dekker recently held presentations in Los Angeles for "Africa's new home for movies".

"In our planning, we asked foreign roleplayers: If you were to build new studios, what would you improve on? We incorporated many of their answers into the complex."

Dekker has secured 35 interviews with representatives of big companies such as Disney, Warner Brothers and Paramount, and no fewer than 110 film-related companies have applied for permanent residence in South Africa.

Details of the studio's first big project – a 3D movie – are to be announced in two weeks. A "huge project" is also in the pipeline.

Dekker says the Fifa Football World Cup has given impetus to American enthusiasm for local film studios. South Africa is now in America's viewfinder.

"The available labour is also here and it is very affordable. Everything came together here, almost like an orchestra. We can all sing together."

"Film studios are basically like a factory and can quickly generate money for a country," says Dekker.

The studio will form a versatile base for the local film industry. It is close to mountains, winelands, the sea and the Karoo – and there are also locations in neighbouring Namibia.

"South Africa basically has the whole world within its borders, where any scene can be erected and shot. With our diverse population, actors are available to portray residents of any country in the world."

Dekker believes the country can learn much from the Australian film industry. The focus there was on three themes: incentives for overseas film crews, excellent infrastructure and good investment in developing local expertise. That is why Australia boasts the most A-list stars outside the US and Britain.

Local technicians and specialists will definitely benefit. No less than 50% of the studio's specialists are drawn from previously disadvantaged communities.

Dekker's dream is to open the first academy for film technicians.

Meanwhile, the facility is getting ready for the first influx of film companies – and then it's "Lights! Camera! Action!"



The Cape Town Film Studio accommodates sound studios, workshops and production offices



Africa's 'new home for movies' is built on 200 hectares and offers easy access to locations, from mountains to the Karoo



Celebrities will soon be flocking to South Africa – the movie studio is set to open officially in October