



LIGHTS, CAMERA, 3D: *Judge Dredd* is being shot at the Cape Town Film Studios near Faure. The film is expected to inject R100 million into the local economy. PICTURE: LEON LESTRADE

# Africa catapulted into world of 3D

Exciting start for Cape film studio as production on *Judge Dredd* begins,

WRITES **MURRAY WILLIAMS**

**T**HE FIRST-ever 3D movie on the African continent is being shot in Cape Town – a milestone which is delighting the local film industry.

Shooting began on *Judge Dredd* on November 14, featuring half a dozen of the most respected names in world movie-making – and christening the brand-new Cape Town Film Studios in Faure.

But what is not widely known is that this is the first three-dimensional film to be shot in South Africa – requiring a series of innovations from production and the studio.

“*Judge Dredd* is largely studio-based, and this is the biggest indoor sound set ever used for any film in South Africa,” said chief executive officer of the Cape Town Film Studio Nico Dekker.

“More than that, being the first 3D in Africa, the production has specially-built camera rigs which comprise two cameras each.

“And what makes it exciting is that we created, with the help of production team of

There is space on the site also to house additional production support – such as wardrobe, make-up, construction and special manufacturing departments, a host of other special effects centres and even exclusive star rooms.

The movie’s director of photography is Anthony Dod Mantle, an Oscar-winner from the UK celebrated for *Slum Dog Millionaire*.

The director is Pete Travis, known for films like *Vantage Point* and, more recently, *End Game*.

And the co-producer is Michael Murphey, who was also the co-producer for *District 9*, who is now a permanent resident in South Africa.

“DNA Films and Andrew Macdonald – they did stuff like *Last King of Scotland*, *Trainspotting* and *The Beach*.”

Star-wise, the film features Karl Urban, from New Zealand, currently starring in *Red* with Bruce Willis, and who starred in *Star Trek*, and Olivia Thirlby, who was in *Juno*.

“These are very strong up-and-coming stars, who are hot property at the moment.”

*Judge Dredd* and the post-production house, The Refinery, the first 3D ‘grading cinema’, where you can watch your 3D rushes (material shot during a day of filming). This is the first high-end 3D grading cinema in South Africa, boasting 35 seats.”

Dekker said the breakthrough into the world of 3D was cause for huge optimism – as local South African film crews were now learning cutting-edge technology for themselves.

“What is so exciting is that the international crews are providing skills transfers to South Africans – none of whom have ever worked on a 3D film,” Dekker said.

“We are now at the forefront of international film-making. The international crew and players are saying we are up there with the best they have worked with in Los Angeles or in the UK. Four hundred people are working on the site – and the vast majority are locals.”

Construction began at the site, on the corner of the N2 and Baden Powell Drive in the direction of Stellenbosch, in January last year, and was completed in October this year.

The complex comprises 17 000m<sup>2</sup> of production facilities – made up of four main sound stages, which include production offices, connected by fibre-optic communication links.

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Dekker said.

The biggest test for the studio had been to design and shape the facility, without knowing if it would be accepted by the top international film-makers, said Dekker. “The *Judge Dredd* booking has opened the door for a new phase in our film-making history.”

Dekker said he saw the studio as a bridge between local film-makers and

their international counterparts.

“The skills transfer happening here would enable us to make our own 3D action films if we wanted to.”

The movie will be spending around R100 million in South Africa, out of a total budget of R250m.

“The studio offers a missing element – a permanent base for film manufacturing.

“The biggest plus is that we attracted productions which required expansive sets, which we could do much more affordably here than anywhere else in the world.”

Dekker admitted he had anticipated a “slow start” to the completed studio calendar, but had been delighted by the significant *Judge Dredd* booking so soon after the studios’ completion.

“We’re in a recession. The strong rand is hurting us. In spite of that, we are thankful to have been able to make such a strong start.”