

Spectacular R1m opening for Dreamworld



LAND OF DREAMS: An aerial view of the site where the new film studio is being built



CONFIDENT: Dreamworld CEO Nico Dekker

Pictures: ENRICO JACOBS

Revenue of R2.5bn a year

By MELANIE PETERS

The first phase of Cape Town's long-delayed and controversial R450 million "Hollywood-style" film studios will finally be launched on Monday at a glitzy, R1m bash.

The party has been sponsored by the local film industry.

It should be completed in just over a year if everything goes according to plan, said its newly appointed chief executive officer Nico Dekker.

Speaking in an interview before the launch planned for Monday at the Faure site, Dekker said he was confident the plan was finally "coming to fruition".

Dekker, who previously ran the successful Table Mountain Motion Picture Studios at an old fertiliser plant in Milnerton, said he had been sceptical when he started up the old studio but it had been a success until the rented studio land was sold.

Plans for state-of-the-art film studios at Faure were launched with a great deal of hype five years ago but the development has been bogged down. Initially the studios were to be called Dreamworld but some in the industry grew so sceptical it would ever see the light of day that they jokingly referred to it as "Dream On".

Shareholders include Videovision Entertainment's Anant Singh, Sabido Investments/etv's Marcel Golding, the Rico Trust, the Helderberg African Chamber of Commerce and Wesgro, the Western Cape's investment and trade promotion agency.

Dekker said: "This is a 10-year, multi-million-rand project that has no equal in South Africa - it is the greatest investment in the South African film industry to date. This is not simply about building studios - it's about establishing a home for film in South Africa that will benefit everyone."

He envisaged that Cape Town Film Studios would be a bridge between the South African and the international film industry.

The film industry brings in billions in revenue to the Western Cape; it was calculated that the industry in the province has a direct turnover of

more than R2.5 billion a year.

According to the City of Cape Town's film commission, on average, 30 feature films, 600 commercials and 2100 still productions are filmed every year. Movies shot locally include the major feature films *10 000 BC*, *Blood Diamond* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, *Flashbacks of a Fool*, starring Daniel Craig, and *Lord of War*, starring Nicolas Cage.

Dekker said phase one of the massive studio construction was already well under way. Foundations at the site in Faure have already been laid and construction of the main building has begun.

Phase one includes four studios of varying sizes, adding up to 7 000m². These will also include hi-tech production offices and workshop space in excess of 5 000m².

The whole site was 200ha but a major component of the wetlands will remain untouched.

There will also be a residential area, a hotel, restaurants, shops and business that will service the industry.

New developments are already springing up in the largely barren surrounding area.

"Cape Town Film Studios is unique to South Africa because it will be a part of a mixed-use film city that includes commercial and light industrial spaces. A designer from the Sydney's Fox Studios is working on our studios, aiming at a self-sufficient, fully integrated 'film city'."

Dekker said a film complex of this nature would entrench South Africa's ability to compete with other major film destinations like Australia and Canada.

He said Monday's launch would be "spectacular". The film industry was so confident of the project's success that it had sponsored the launch to the tune of R1m.

Singh and Golding will make a presentation on the future look of the studios, while the entertainment will include the DDK Choir from the film *U-Carmen E-Khayelitsha*, the new voice of South African opera Golda Schultz and stand-up comedian Riaad Moosa.