

City film studio vision becomes a reality at last

Pie in the sky comes down to earth

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SPIDERMAN flies overhead, James Bond prowls the streets of Prague and Superman rises from the dead... and all in Cape Town!

Pie in the sky? Not if three South Africans have their way.

Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies, film-maker Anant Singh and businessman Nico Dekker yesterday led a tour of the sky-high Cape Town Film Studios where the world will soon make movie magic.

The trio could be found high in the gantries of the five-storey sound stages that have risen from the sandy soil between the N2 and Baden Powell Drive.

The elevated gangways will, by the middle of next year, be home to cameramen and technicians filming the next generation of world-wide blockbusters... if all goes according to plan.

Singh and Dekker have walked a long road to make their vision reality, creating Africa's first world-class film studios on Cape Town's back stoep. What began as a pipe dream is now well on track.

The pair guided Davies, President Jacob Zuma's new captain of industry, on a tour of two massive warehouse-like steel skeletons.

These are to be clad and insulated with concrete slabs to create sound-proof, weather-proof stages on which the world's film directors will be able to recreate any scene their scriptwriters devise for them.

"These will be the best studios anyone can offer anywhere," Singh said – matching the best film-making facilities in the US, Canada, Spain or the United Kingdom, from Warner Brothers in California to Pinewood Studios outside London.

And who will be creating these big-screen sets? "The people of Macassar, Blue Downs and Khayelitsha," Singh explained.

Dekker, the CEO of Cape Town Film Studios, envisages that his studio complex as the pre-eminent movie-making hub on the continent.

More than 80 businesses have



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: Anant Singh, chairman of Cape Town Film Studios, checks out some of the equipment at the fledgling studio during a visit there with Trade and Industry Minister Dr Rob Davies and members of the media .

PICTURE: IAN LANDSBERG

already signed up to make the Cape Town Film Studios their new home. These are the peripheral yet key light industries that make movies happen – from carpentry workshops to hi-tech post-production suites. Working in them will be technical staff and artisans from the neighbouring suburbs, including film crews trained in a dedicated film school.

Davies's department recently pumped R16 million into the studios' development. He said the "industrialisation of the film

industry" and the creation of a "one-stop film-making shop" was not only good news for the economy. It would also allow South African directors to tell their stories in new films which would help to forge South Africa's identity, through scenes portrayed around the world.

Singh hinted that one of the first films to be shot there could be the celluloid version of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* – a guaranteed blockbuster if ever there was one.

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