

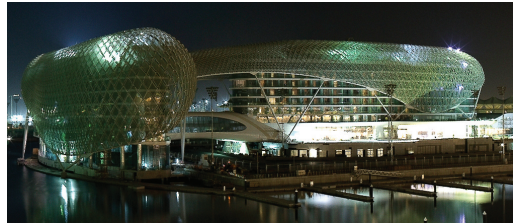
## Sand in your shoes, a smile on your face

That would be the best way to describe Production Manager Henrik Griesner as he drove his way up the dunes with a few bouncing members of his crew in the back seat. "Christmas in the Desert," is a German made-for-TV movie that shot for 3 weeks in the UAE. Others might have said "a big kid in a big sand box."



The United Arab Emirates does have sand, lots of sand; but we also have crystal clear waters, white beaches, glorious palms, famous architecture, heritage sites and striking mountains. If the story fits, it's a great place to film; and Abu Dhabi Film Commission (ADFC) has much to offer the international filmmaking community. Our Locations and Production support department is dedicated to providing a growing database of high quality location photos, all with GPS locations.

These guys live to get out of the office, and most times armed with a camera and a 4-wheel drive. They have over 10 years of experience in the UAE as location scouts, DP's, and location managers; and have worked on films like *Syriana* (2005) and *The Kingdom* (2007) and the recently released *City of Life* (2009). They have the local connections to production support, and the knowledge to help see a project through. ADFC recently accredited and processed shooting permits for over 27 international broadcast teams shooting in Abu Dhabi for the final F1 race in 2009.



For new filmmakers, Abu Dhabi Film Commission offers the Aflam Qaseera (short film) production fund, New Voices documentary and drama production internship schemes, both giving real production opportunities to emerging talent and production companies in the UAE. The Low Budget Feature Film Fund will see 5 low budget feature films produced as part of a New Producers Development Programme linking Production Finance with Production, International Market events, and eventual distribution.

The Emirates Media Skills Training Council is the start of an ongoing forum to maintain a dialogue and connection between Media Educators and Media Companies to help ensure program outcomes and student skills match industry needs. Green Kids on Screen will see a visual storytelling film culture start early on in elementary and secondary schools. Four students from Abu Dhabi were recently sent by ADFC to Mira Nair's Maisha Film Lab in Kampala, Uganda. Film production master classes will become available throughout the Emirates. The award winning WETA workshop recently gave public demonstrations on prosthetic makeup for film as part of the Emirates Film Competition during Middle East International Film Festival.



ADFC also assists in the development of the film and TV industry in Abu Dhabi, nurturing new talent and contributing to the promotion of Arab culture through film and television. And realizing this ambition is becoming easier, with some help from our friends. The film, TV and media industries in Abu Dhabi are currently entering an exciting growth phase. New production opportunities are emerging, new broadcasters are about to go live and major international media organisations are actively setting up bases in the city.

TwoFour54 is one company that provides a multifaceted approach to supporting the local and regional industries with extensive training, content creation, and production programmes. The strength of MEIFF, the Emirates Film Competition and Shasha Grant all contribute to a vibrant time. This year over 40 leading media professionals joined ADFC's Circle Conference discussing the issues most relevant to our industry and our region. We believe that each one of our guests helped contribute to building a strong and sustainable industry for the future.



The Shasha Grant is the Abu Dhabi Film Commission's One Hundred Thousand Dollars international screenwriting competition designed to identify, develop and launch the careers of outstanding Arab writers and filmmakers. The programme exposes emerging filmmakers to high-level industry decision makers and facilitates financing for talented writers and directors from around the world. The 2008 Shasha winner has a script currently in production with Fox Pictures.



The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage and the government of Abu Dhabi continues to have a clear vision and strong commitment to the success of Abu Dhabi Film Commission, the Film and Television industry, and to the Arts. The Sadyaat Island Project is under construction and will house a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Louvre.

Studios are being built, stories are being written; films are on the way. It is indeed an exciting time to be a filmmaker in Abu Dhabi and the UAE. You might get some sand in your shoes, but you're sure to leave with a smile on your face.