

# The Callsheet

Growing the African Film Industry



## M.I.A. USE PHANTOM GOLDS TO SHOOT AD IN 3D

Central Johannesburg was blocked off to traffic for three days recently when two Phantom Gold high-resolution digital cameras were used for the first time in South Africa to shoot an advert in 3D.

The advert will be shown in 3D in cinemas and enjoyed by the small but growing band of consumers who own 3D TVs. The rest of us will have to make do with the 2D image captured by the two individual cameras.

The shoot was organised by Libbi Ball of Cape Town's M.I.A. Films on behalf of an international client and its British advertising agency.

The two cameras were assembled on a Quasar mirror rig manoeuvred by a Scorpio gyroscopic stabilised head. This was suspended from a heavy technocrane, mounted on a tracking vehicle brought up from Cape Town for the shoot.

One camera pointed directly at the action, looking through a two-way mirror. The second was attached vertically above the first and pointed down, capturing the action from the reflection in the mirror. Those separate 2D images will be composited in post-production to achieve the full 3D effect.

The rig and 12 of the UK's leading stereoscopic technicians flew to South Africa for the shoot. M.I.A. had about 90 people in its crew, including grips and gaffers, a large art department, the assistant director, stunt co-ordinator Gideon Van Schoor, and three stuntmen.

"This is the first time this rig has been used in South Africa," said line producer Brad Bickerton. "They've only used it a couple of times internationally so the guys from the UK have had some experience, but it's pretty new to them too. Every single person on set is learning about this whole system, and what's so amazing is that our guys have the opportunity to work with this very new technology and learn how it works. They're gaining the most incredible experience."

The knowledge the crew gains will improve the skills of the local film industry and make South Africa an attractive option once more people begin to shoot in this 3D medium, Brad says.

"It's extremely expensive technology at the moment, but there are companies in South Africa looking into it because it does look like it's the future of advertising and TV. So at some stage hopefully we will have our own rigs and cameras here."

Richard Skepper of stereoscopic company Vision3@Compendium says the high-speed cameras are in a class of their own because normal digital cameras cannot operate at these speeds of picture capture. Shooting at high frame speeds in high resolution makes the picture quality so good that when you slow it down you can see a bullet moving with absolute clarity.

"We're using a mirror rig because it lets two lenses be in exactly the same place, but each is slightly offset to give you the 3D view," says Richard. "What's different to a normal shoot is that we can slightly change the position of the cameras relative to each other to affect the depth and the volume of the shot. You have always had a physical problem with two reels of film going through a camera because you can never get absolutely identical left and right images. There's always something that makes them uneven so it's very difficult in post-production to get a perfect image. Now we have absolutely the same image with no film stretch."

The 60-second commercial features a stunt car flipping up vertically and crash landing, and more bizarrely, a herd of 20 horned Nguni cattle charging down Fox Street.

M.I.A. had only a week from the job being confirmed to the start of shooting. The team worked flat out to get permission to block off several streets to traffic, and to find three old *Starsky and Hutch* type cars, so the crash could be filmed three

times from three different angles.

They also had to locate a herd of cattle, get permission to set them loose in the city centre, and cover signs in the street and on the shops so nothing tells you it's Johannesburg.

One reason the client chose Johannesburg was because they wanted filming to start almost immediately, and M.I.A. assured them they could put it together within a week.

"They wanted somewhere with a European feel like Barcelona or Prague and these crossroads are amazing with their beautiful old buildings," Brad says.

But the most unusual task was to make the Nguni cows look more ferocious by disguising their cute brown and white patches. "Our art department had to paint them with non-toxic, water-based paint to make them all black. Believe me, they don't look quite so cute when they're stampeding towards you then," says Brad.

**Lesley Stones**