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FNQ READY TO STAR

Filmmakers spruik region as safe haven for big productions

THE Far North is being showcased as a COVID-safe haven to produce movies.



Main picture: Stewart McLean

Local filmmaker Travis Bain is committed to developing the Far Northern film industry. Insets, Vernon Wells and Meganne West in local locations for the film Starspawn: Overture.

Independent filmmaker Travis Bain (right) said the region had almost everything to offer producers. "We have got everything, we have got great locations, the rainforest, the Reef and the Outback to put on film."

Mulgrave MP Curtis Pitt is confident a \$6.8 million scaled down Hollywood-style soundstage, operated in partnership with CQUniversity on the Cairns waterfront, will be funded by the state government this year. A FAR Northern safe haven from the COVID crisis could offer a refuge for big budget t Netflix-style productions looking to take advantage of iconic rainforest, Reef and outback filming locations.

Setting the stage is the drama Dive Club which is using the blue water backdrop of Port Douglas, a location which is set to captivate a global audience of more than 190 countries on Netflix.

Off the back of his short movie Starspawn: Overture released directly to Vimeo and Amazon Prime, independent filmmaker Travis Bain reckons the Far North is a movie producer's paradise just waiting to be tapped.

"If you look at what is happening in the world right now most Hollywood d films have had to accept serious COVID-safe rules to shoot anything," he said.

"We have got everything, g, we have got great locations, the rainforest, the Reef and the Outback to put on film."

Mulgrave MP Curtis Pitt t agreed with the sentiment of local filmmakers and said a state-funded \$6.8m soundstage – promised in the lead up to the state election – will mean a one stop content production hub for the Far North.

“We have known for many years we have great locations for shooting and the soundstage will add another string to our bow,” he said.

“It definitely will happen in 2021 but the timeline will be subject to a range of things, including the detailed design phase and finalising the location.”

It’s hoped high demand for streaming content will attract big name productions from right across the globe. Cairns-based filmmaker Mr Bain agreed.

“If we had the facilities - we could be hosting producers from around the e world safe from the e pandemic,” he said.

“If we can do that h at there is no reason why others can’t do it.

“The tech has advanced leaps and bounds. You don’t need a sound stage the size of an aircraft hangar.

“I think we can harness the emerging technologies and set up a thriving production space.” Mareeba- based fi filmmaker Lisa Bertoldo d (left) has recently re received a \$10,000 Regional Arts Development Fund to produce a dark drama/comedy film cal called Lindy Lou.

She said the development of a major film industry would mean locals who headed south to train as actors and film techs could come back to the Far North to work. “Everyone has to train down south so it is hard for people to get back up here to make films,” she said.

“It (would) give everyone the opportunity to work on a professional set and build up credentials.”

At the core of the industry push was a diverse range of landscapes from the Outback to Reef and rainforest all within a few hours’ drive of each other.

Star of the 1981 classic Mad Max 2, Vernon Wells has recently completed a Far Northern shoot on Starspawn: Overture under the direction of Mr Bain.

Co-starring Meganne West, the science fiction/horror story was filmed entirely on location in the Far North.

Inspired by the Australian legend of the Min Min Lights and the writings of the late American horror author H.P. Lovecraft, the film went west to the Tyrconnell Gold Mine and spent a week shooting in Ravenshoe.

The film is a 20 minute short released straight to streaming platforms.



“It is having healthy viewing on Amazon Prime and I am happy with that,” he said.

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