

Retribution ready for rough-cut

The South African film *Retribution* has completed its principal photography and should have a rough-cut ready by mid July, as it aims to premier at forthcoming international film festivals. Directed by Mukunda Dewill, a commercials director in his theatrical debut, it stars Joe Mafela and Jeremy Crutchley and is produced by Philip Key.

Moonlighting Films (*Skin*, *Invictus*) is the production company behind the film and has financed the project in partnership with the National Film and Video Foundation ([NFVF](#)), which is distributing the film locally. The project included DOP Miles Goodall and editor Richard Starkey. James Matthes and Daniel Matthee are composing the sound track with the sound mix mixed by Simon Ratcliff at Sound & Motion.

Described as a psychological thriller, Dewill conceptualised it to have minimal financial demands but still look impressive. The key lay in a high impact script fuelled by powerful performances and set against the backdrop of a single location, as inspired by tightly contained thrillers such as *Misery* and *Death Trap*. The aim was to remove any indulgence from the production process to channel every available cent onto the screen. Finally, the film was made for a budget similar to that of a two-day commercial but looks and feels like a top-end thriller in the tradition of Hitchcock or the Coen Brother's *No Country for Old Men*.

Everyone gained

"It was important that we had good crew, flat deals, great food and willing participants," says producer Key, "We wanted to ensure that everyone took away something from the project, which for some was the chance to move up the ladder. For others, it was the exhilaration and challenge of working on a streamlined project that was uncompromising in realising maximum value on the screen through a disciplined and innovative production process. Everyone had to up their game and find new and creative ways to make it work, and everyone delivered. For our suppliers, it was also an opportunity to co-invest in a project with a major client. Nobody was in it for the money but nobody had to work for free."

Fast shooting

The 90-minute film was shot in only 14 days on location in Bot Rivier just outside Cape Town. "There was great camaraderie and it was led from the top. Everybody got stuck in with Miles at the forefront, moving lights or picking up the clapperboard when needed. Dewill worked like a Trojan with the crew running to keep up as we chased the sun that seemed to disappear prematurely each day. Dylan Voogt did a great job as UPM to keep everything on track amidst great filmic ambition balanced against a severely tight budget," continued Key.

Financial innovation

A lot of innovation was also required in terms of the film's financing. Moonlighting's Marvin Saven constructed a finance plan that made the most of the NFVF contribution coupled with a mixture of financial benefits available to local filmmakers as well as private equity, such that the financing was green-lit in a remarkably short space of time. "With this type of project and the financing model we were able to deploy, we are confident that we have the makings of a production and financial template that really puts the power into the hands of the filmmaker and gives both the producer and the financiers a genuine chance at box office return", says Saven.

"We look forward to a great product that should illustrate that good films (from both a critical and commercial point of view) can be made for a minimal budget if the right approach is adopted from the ground up."

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