

The Advertiser

Why Hollywood film moguls are turning their eyes towards South Australia

Next time you watch the latest Hollywood blockbuster, there's a chance some of that movie magic was woven in Adelaide. But our best is yet to come.

Tom Bowden, The Advertiser
November 1, 2019 5:45pm



Rising Sun Pictures staff create the visual effects for X-Men Days of Future Past.

MORE IN NEWS



Trust me, it's energy meter madness



The People's Pups — winning names revealed!



Cracking down on these drugs is no laughing matter

- [Read more great stories at FutureADL.com.au](http://FutureADL.com.au)

Hollywood might be half a world away, but Adelaide – which is cementing itself as a world leader in film and media production – is on the tip of the industry’s tongue.

You only need to look at our recent successes, new South Australian Film Corporation chief executive officer Kate Croser says.

“The top three Australian films at the box office so far this year were produced in SA – *Top End Wedding*, *Storm Boy* and *Hotel Mumbai*,” she says.

“We also had *The Hunting*, by South Australian company Closer Productions, produced here and that’s SBS’s top rating drama series ever.



South Australian Film Corporation chief executive Kate Croser. Picture Matt Turner

“We’re really servicing the whole industry – from really high-end, huge-scale productions, to important Australian feature films, and also television – which is a massive growth area for us.

“It’s an exciting time. There has been a huge amount of growth in the South Australian screen sector over the past few years and we are starting to see the fruits of that at the moment.”

And that success has come about through simply doing what the SAFC does best – telling its story.

“It’s about proudly promoting the advantages of being in South Australia and we have a huge amount over and above the other states,” Croser says.

“Our post production and visual effects sector is internationally renowned – the companies we have here like Rising Sun Pictures, Mill Film, who have moved here with Technicolor, and then we have KOJO, who have been around for 20 years and are at the forefront of their field in post-production as well as visual effects.

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Nine exclusive new channels. One amazing new experience. **From Nov 7**

“Plus there are newer visual effects companies like Resin and Artisan who are just starting up and are growing exponentially.

“We’ve become a hub for post-production and visual effects and that’s been helped through a policy lever which is the Post Production, Digital and Visual Effects rebate (PDV) introduced a few years back.”

This rebate, it turns out, has been critical in growing the industry but it’s more than a few rebates that’s attracting people to make their films here.

“As well as the PDV rebate we also have a 10 per cent of SA spend production grant and a payroll tax exemption, and that’s very attractive to productions looking to shoot here, but they’re not just going to come here based on that,” Croser says.





Some of the visual Effects in the Harry Potter movies were produced by Rising Sun Pictures.

“We also offer a unique combination of world class studios and an amazing diverse range of found locations.

“Within an easy drive of Adelaide CBD and the airport you can get to city, outback, forest and beach locations, and they’re all really diverse.

“We’re really ideally suited for those productions that need a combination of studio and found locations, so when we go after those in a strategic way we are incredibly successful because no other state offers that.”

But it’s not simply what you see on screen that’s making waves.

Adelaide is also the home base for an internationally renowned post-sound community – the perfect accompaniment to Adelaide’s more established post-production and visual effects houses.

“We have the best Dolby mixing theatre in the country here, and that’s bringing a lot of international productions to South Australia,” Croser says.

“Productions the SAFC doesn’t even necessarily invest in come here to Adelaide to mix their film, do foley or other elements of the sound for their film or series.”

And it’s not just film and TV that are growing.

The games industry is fast gaining traction, with SAFC recently launching a Games Innovation Fund to support serious, educational, narrative and non-narrative format games and games with global audiences.

“Figures show us 85 per cent of Australians are regularly playing games – which is mindblowing,” Croser says.

“People don’t often realise they’re regular game players because it’s almost an unconscious thing where they are engaging in these interactive experiences.”

Rising Sun Pictures' impressive demo reel
Play Video
Play

UP NEXT

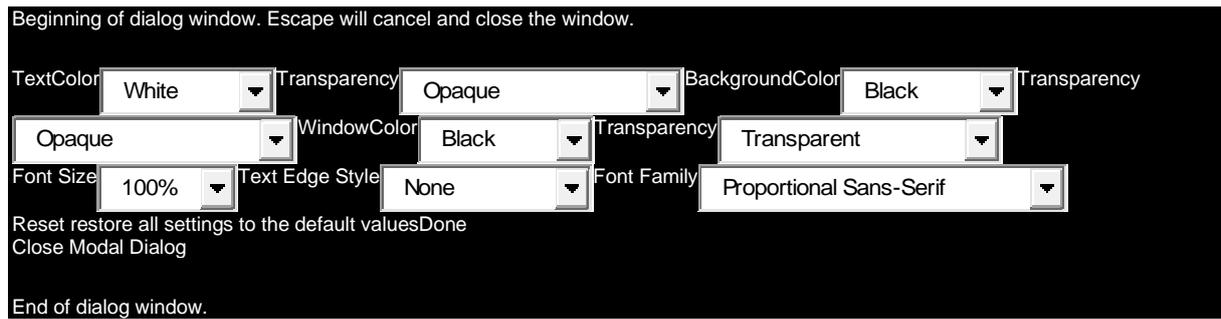
Mute
Loaded: 5.76%
Stream Type LIVE
Remaining Time -2:53
Current Time 0:00
/
Duration 2:53
Video Autoplay
Log in

Closed Captions (CC)

Fullscreen
Playback Rate
1x
Captions

- captions settings, opens captions settings dialog

- captions off, selected



The Advertiser2:53

Rising Sun Pictures' impressive demo reel

Rising Sun Pictures is a visual effects company founded in South Australia. RSP have brought some of your favourite film...

Earlier this year SA Premier Steven Marshall set the film industry abuzz when he announced a big budget movie adaptation of video game *Mortal Kombat* would be filmed in South Australia, with the State Government providing a 10 per cent rebate on production money spent here.

The film will inject up to \$70 million into the local economy, creating about 580 jobs, with more than 1500 extras required.

It's directed by Australian Simon McQuoid and produced by James Wan, who recently directed *Game of Thrones* star Jason Momoa on the DC epic *Aquaman*, on the Gold Coast.

Mortal Kombat is the biggest film to have ever been shot in South Australia, which has already produced such acclaimed films as *Top End Wedding*, *Red Dog*, *Wolf Creek* and *The Rover*.

So why the government investment in the entertainment industry? Easy – it's big business.

In the 2017/18 calendar year, the screen industry's economic contribution to gross state product was \$119.5 million.

“Obviously this year, with *Mortal Kombat* filming, that is going to be significantly higher, and what that equates to is 1170 full time employees,” Croser says.

“The money that the SAFC hands out is leveraged 10 to one by productions, so we see it as a really good investment in terms of the spend it levers in the state plus the employment and skilling outcomes it delivers.



A scene from the video game, Mortal Kombat 11.

On *Mortal Kombat*, not only is the production hiring a lot of South Australians and skilling them up to Hollywood standards but we're also accessing hundreds of tradespeople from other industries and they're having the opportunity to work on Hollywood productions and learn new skills in screen production.

"The other reason government recognises the screen sector is so important to the economy is that spend on screen production drives really significant levels of activity

in the other creative industries such as advertising, publishing, music, music, performing arts and digital technologies.

“That production is sourcing skills from so many different sectors and putting spend into so many different industries like tourism, accommodation, catering and professional services, so the flow-on effects have to be considered as well, not just the direct economic contribution.”

It’s certainly working, with Croser confirming Adelaide’s 57 Films have recently produced key episodes of prominent Chinese television series *If Time Flows Back* here, taking advantage of SA’s stunning locations and SAFC’s Adelaide Studio’s two state-of-the-art sound stages, Dolby mixing theatre and foley room.

The hit drama series will showcase iconic Adelaide locations from North Tce to the Barossa Valley to an audience of more than 90 million people via Chinese television and streaming platforms.

“When you start to open up other international audiences to what we have to offer here, the future is unlimited in terms of how we could expand,” Croser says.

“It’s self-sustaining into the long-term, I believe because we will continue to see changes to the way audiences consume content which will unlock opportunities for content creators.”



Rising Sun Pictures created hologram images for Captain Marvel. Picture: Supplied by Rising Sun Pictures

SA VFX COMPANY A TRUE MARVEL

From little things, big things grow.

That saying has probably never been more apt than the case of Adelaide's Rising Sun Pictures. Born of four innovators on a chesterfield couch in Kensington's Rising Sun

Hotel's front bar in May 1995, the company creates industry leading and award-winning visual effects work for some of Hollywood's biggest productions.

RSP co-founder and managing director Tony Clark says the path to where they are now has been paved with a lot of hard work, and by an army of immensely talented people. "We had a tiny space in Kensington with two or three computers with a fraction of the power of what we have now, and a couple of software licences, and we started doing a couple of small commercials there," Clark says.

"We needed a name for our company because we had this piece of work that we needed to start and so we thought 'Rising Sun Pictures' and we thought we'll change that in a couple of years, but we never did.

Currently we've got a staff of more than 150 people, and will likely be at about 185 by Christmas," he says.



Visual Effects for Marvel Studio's Thor Ragnarok featuring Australia's Cate Blanchett as villain, Hela. Picture: Supplied by Rising Sun Pictures

“In order to do the complexity of work that we do, we need to have a strong mix of very talented and uniquely skilled people, and enough of them to do that complex work at scale.

By virtue of the fact that technology has driven the state of the art forward, that has set everybody's expectations higher – there's an incredible and insatiable demand for

the kind of work that we do and, in terms of the tent pole movies that are out there, they want more and more complexity but also have a strong focus on costs.”

Some of these recent films include *X-Men Dark Phoenix*, Tim Burton’s *Dumbo* remake, *Captain Marvel*, *Alita Battle Angel* and five of the *Harry Potter* films.

“*Captain Marvel* worldwide did \$1.1 billion in revenue, which is a vast amount of money to come from a film like that – so they’re the kinds of films we work on but along the way we also work on some TV series, so we did some work on the Foxtel series *Deadline Gallipoli*,” Clark says.

“All of the time we’ve been working on big things at the very leading edge.

“We’re lucky that we have this network of people we’ve worked with over the years who send this work in our direction.

“Every one of these projects is allowing us to push the state of the art even further, which helps us build a better and more widely recognised company.”

Not that their reputation needs any help – the company has won just about every industry award imaginable, with their incredible Quicksilver sequence from *X-Men Days of Future Past* earning the outfit universal praise.



A before shot of Rising Sun Pictures' visual effects for X-Men Days of Future Past's "Quicksilver Scene". Picture: Supplied by Rising Sun Pictures



An after shot of Rising Sun Pictures' visual effects for X-Men Days of Future Past's "Quicksilver Scene". Picture: Supplied by Rising Sun Pictures

"Along the way we've also innovative pieces of technology and spun them into a stand-alone company called Cospective that makes tools for filmmakers, including a tool called cineSync, which won both an Academy Award and an Emmy for the team," Clark says.

"As a company we can't rest on our laurels and expect work to just show up.

“We have to be driving the leading edge in terms of the kind of sophistication, finish and quality of work that we deliver here.

“We’ve had a couple of really strong and consistent years in terms of financial performance, mostly enabled by the fact that the state’s environment has been really positive from an investment perspective.



Rising Sun Pictures' Tony Clark.

“Every time we do good work it enables more good work to come, so it’s a wonderful virtuous cycle like that, where good work begets more good work.”

But to do good work, you need good people, so RSP, working with the University of South Australia, created a graduate program in 2015 to help bring new talent into the industry.

“It’s turning out work-ready artists for digital production, and those artists are not just working in Rising Sun, they’re feeding us, KOJO and all of the companies in town that are working in this space. Now, there are a lot of the production houses around Australia have artists working with them who have come out of our training course,” Clark says.

“That’s been great for us because it’s not only been a great feeder of talent into our business, but it’s also into other businesses in South Australia.”

Associate Professor Paula Geldens, head of the University of South Australia's school of creative industries told *The Advertiser* earlier this year she had seen a surge in interest in film courses, with the university to offer a new creative industries degree from 2020. More than 70 per cent of UniSA's visual effects postgraduates are now working in the industry, either locally, nationally or internationally.

“With so many high-profile local and international film productions now occurring in the state, we could well be witnessing a return to the Australian film ‘renaissance’ years (1970-1985),” she says.

-