

EES wins Cape Town Film Studios contract

Electrical Engineering Solutions (EES) has been awarded the contract to project manage the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, from construction to operational service provisioning, for Cape Town Film Studios (CTFS), claimed to be South Africa's first major, Hollywood-style film studio in Cape Town. The R430-million project will be fully operational by the end of 2010.



EES, a leader in the provision of Information Technology (IT) solutions to the built environment, is active in the design, implementation and system integration aspects of IT and Building Automation Systems (BAS). The new contract involves project managing all of CTFS's ICT services.

Integral to this will be the design and implementation of the infrastructure to enable a smart precinct. "This intelligent infrastructure is reliant on a properly designed structured cabling system" explains Bradley Hemphill, Managing Director of Electrical Engineering Solutions (EES). "Cape Town Film Studio's services and those of their tenants will all operate via the intelligent electronic transmission backbone."

According to press reports, CTFS is South Africa's largest ever investment in its film industry, which is said to employ more than 20 000 people and contribute an indirect annual turnover of over R3.5bn to the country's gross domestic product.

CTFS is a 200ha development off Baden Powell Drive outside Somerset West. Once all phases have been completed, CTFS will be Cape Town's first, fully fledged film studio and sound stage complex. Local filmmaker Anant Singh and e.tv's Marcel Golding are the main developers of CTFS, and the goal is to construct a complete 'one-stop-shop' production facility to help local producers clinch deals and also attract significant interest from international film producers. The developers are being supported by all tiers of government - on national, provincial and local levels.

Home for filmmaking in Africa

"CTFS is destined to become the physical home for filmmaking in Africa", emphasizes Nico Dekker, CEO of CTFS. "It is important to remember that CTFS does not belong only to Cape Town, but will serve South Africa, Southern Africa and the rest of Africa as a gateway for international production, as well as the development of sustainable local production."

Dekker continues: “The major drawcard for making films in South Africa is the fact that physical production costs are at least 50% more affordable than, for instance, Los Angeles. Added to this is a highly skilled crew and technical know-how.”

A state-of-the-art production facility needs to be supported by world class infrastructure. The smart building requirements that EES is planning will include the initial following requirements:

- ICT data centres eg. storage and mail;
- ICT endpoints eg. desktops, telephony and video conferencing;
- audio visual eg. projectors and screens;
- security eg. CCTV and access control; and
- finance eg. billing.

CTFS is fast attracting property owners and tenants, in fields related to or suited to the film industry, in the form of workshops, retail spaces, commercial offices and light industrial facilities. The contract therefore also involves the provision of smart infrastructure to meet the needs of these owners and tenants.

The implementation of this intelligent infrastructure forms part of CTFS's ICT business plan. “This is a massive advantage, as it is vital that IT infrastructure be including in the early stages of design and development to ensure the IT and BAS support both current and future information needs,” emphasizes Hemphill.

Intelligent infrastructure should be designed and constructed early on, as there are architectural requirements for an intelligent, IT-based building design. Moreover, it is more cost-effective for the appropriate infrastructure, cable containment and spatial planning to be included in the architecture and constructed from the start.

“The planning upfront and focus on teamwork will help to ensure that on completion CTFS will achieve the goal to be a complete, state-of-the-art, ‘one-stop-shop’ production facility encouraging and boosting local film production as well as much interest from the international industry,” Hemphill says.

“We are also working as a team with the developer and other major players meaning that there is systems integration, which is essential,” he adds.

All players need to co-operate to avoid a disconnect of services and deliver a complete solution. A disconnect of services makes it difficult for staff and tenants etc to take full advantage of the benefits of smart buildings, such as integrated communications and security systems.

From the start, it has been one of CTFS's objectives to involve a broad range of businesses and individuals to partner with it in pioneering and developing this project.

“CTFS is irrevocably on the path to completion, and I commend all players who have walked this path with us to date for their commitment, enthusiasm and unwavering hard work and productivity. However, the perseverance and dedication certainly does not stop here, and we will continue to proactively talk to a wide variety of players with regard to the ongoing, upbeat development of the film industry in our country,” Dekker concludes.