

Bali, most beautiful

The paradise island of Bali was the setting for the last silent film ever produced in Hollywood and the last film to use the two-strip Technicolor process. Today it is still a much-loved location for filmmakers the world over.

THE LAST Hollywood-made silent movie – Henri de la Falaise’s *Legong: Dance Of The Virgins* – was shot on the Indonesian island of Bali in 1935. Three years previously Andre Roosevelt’s *Goona Goona* was also shot there and, together, the two movies helped launch Bali as a free-loving paradise for a number of Hollywood trendsetters, including artist-musician Walter Spies, playwright Noel Coward, Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton, and Charlie Chaplin.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and you can be forgiven for thinking that the bombings of Paddy’s Bar and the Sari Club in the town of Kuta on October 12, 2002 – that killed 202 people – will have tarnished the island’s sunny, carefree image. Yet it seems the location is as popular as ever. Going to press discussions were under way with Kennedy Miller (*Babe*, *Mad Max*) to film the Australian thriller *Mango River* – a Pierre Javaux Production – on Bali. Director Marc Esposito’s *Toute la Beaute du Monde*, starring Marc Lavoine and Zoe Felix, finished shooting on Bali and the neighboring island of Lombok, at the end of last year.

“There have been around 40 projects filmed throughout Indonesia in 2004,” says Deborah Gabinetti of the Bali Film Commission. And she adds that, recently, surprisingly few producers have expressed security fears. “We have close relations with all government departments, including local and national security forces,” she says. “There are point people on call 24 hours a day assigned specifically to assist film crews,

and preventative and emergency response services have also been increased. This gives us the confidence to actively and responsibly promote Indonesia to filmmakers.”

Marc Esposito backs this up. “Honestly I had no fears about shooting on the island,” he says. “I personally feel that if you begin to fear the terrorists they have won, so to ignore it is the best thing we can do. Of course after the attacks we considered other locations, but we decided in the end that the film was to be shot on Bali or we had no movie. We worked closely with the Bali Film Commission and the local and national security authorities, who stayed with us throughout filming. Their assurances and professionalism satisfied any concerns we might have had.”

Today once again it’s the beauty of Bali that comes to mind, rather than the horrors of 2002. “Once Marc had set foot on Bali he was convinced it had to be filmed here,” says Gabinetti. And as Esposito himself puts it: “I wrote this script before I first visited Bali 10 years ago, and at that time the story was set just somewhere in Asia. But once I got there, it was love at first sight.”

Particularly, Esposito liked what he calls “the reality of the settings. The authenticity we were able to capture by filming genuine temple ceremonies and Balinese daily life, with very little set-up or direction.” His crew worked to a tight schedule, shooting 60 locations in eight weeks. “The Film Commission was able to gain access to everything we needed, on governmental and local levels. They made life very simple for us,” he says. “We shot such varied landscapes – the sea, volcanoes, mountains, traditional villages, temples, rice fields, forests and beautiful multi-colored beaches – all located on just one island of 2,169 square miles.”

The local people made life easy too. “The Balinese are very hard working, not as I was originally led to believe,” Esposito says. “The people are always smiling and the local communities welcomed us warmly. Everyone on the set was very moved by the kindness and generosity of the Balinese. Bali is also extremely spiritual and you cannot help but be affected by this.” He adds: “In my film I depict Bali and Lombok as I see them, the most beautiful places in the world – *Toute la Beaute du Monde*.” ■

SHOOTING ON BALI:

- Indonesia has 350 ethnic groups, and readily available extras on short notice
- Strong history of filmmaking, therefore a solid production infrastructure
- In the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, there are three Kodak endorsed labs, four Telecines (2 digital), editing, world-class animation (CGI) facilities and technical support
- Indonesia is a tax-free haven for foreign artists and although there are no government incentives in place, the Film Commission says it can undercut most budgets by 10-20%
- The Film Commission works closely with the private sector, including hotels, airlines and ground transportation.



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