

Empowering Provincial Youth Through Filmmaking



Dr. Melanie Chait, CEO of the Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking



Prof. Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, at the launch of the Big Fish/ EU initiative

Supported by the European Union (EU) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), the Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking has launched an ambitious nationwide initiative designed to empower South Africa's youth by taking the arts of motion picture production far outside of the country's rural areas.

One of the signs that a society is truly free, according to Professor Adam Habib, Vice Chancellor of Wits University, speaking at the launch of a new empowerment initiative by the Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking, is that its people are free to tell their stories. The work of Big Fish has always been geared towards empowerment, which it provides to its students in two separate but closely related ways. It teaches them the skills involved with filmmaking and thus enables them, not only to earn a living, but also to attain this most vital attribute of free people — the tools necessary to tell their own stories. Economic and cultural empowerment thus occur concurrently. A new initiative by Big Fish, facilitated by major financial support from the European Union,

enables the school to expand its reach beyond its Johannesburg and Cape Town headquarters, deep into the country's rural areas, where film schools have had little — if any — reach before.

The concept behind the programme is simple yet innovative. A select group of Big Fish graduates have been charged with returning to their home regions in the less developed parts of the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, North West and Limpopo (with a view to expand into the Free State, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga as soon as possible) and set up hubs from which they can not only work on their own filmmaking projects, but also teach local aspirants.

This project, says Big Fish CEO, Dr Melanie Chait, has 'been a dream of Big Fish for the last five years, since we realised that not all filmmakers want to live in Johannesburg... The project will not only