Bonanza for Durban film buffs

NOSIPHO MNGOMA

TAKE 35... and action!

The clapperboard snaps down tonight as South Africa’s largest and longest-running film festival begins.

For 10 days the film industry and film enthusiasts will be treated to more than 250 films from around the world in the 35th Durban International Film Festival.

This year the festival, hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Centre for Creative Arts, will be one of the stars in its own production, with a retrospective exhibition of its poster designs at the KZN Society of Arts (KZNSA).

This will be intercut with a reflection on South Africa’s 20 years of democracy, which includes “a focus on film that explores the many diverse facets of the nation’s history over the past two decades”.

With almost 80 South African feature and short films, the largest number in festival history, the country is sure to take centre stage.

Eagerly awaited is the opening night’s film, Hard To Get. The movie by Zee Ntuli is produced by Helena Spring and Durban-born Junaid Ahmed.

It tells of a young womaniser, TK, played by Pallance Dladla, who falls for a sexy, reckless young thief, Skiets, portrayed by Thishiwe Ziqubu.

It has been described as “an action-fuelled love story overflowing with visual poetry”.

Outcry

There was anger last year when the first night’s excitement faded to black after the Film and Publication Board called cut on Jahmil Qhubeka’s film Of Good Report.

The film was later screened amid outcry and legal action.

A spirit of reconciliation is sure to be felt in at least one of the discussion sessions hosted by the festival.

The session, titled “Unmasking Reconciliation: 20 Years On... Moving Beyond the Cliché”, will include Alex Boraine, the vice-chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, writer, commentator and columnist Max du Preez, actress Thembile Mtshali Jones, activist Ela Gandhi and former Constitutional Court judge and activist Albie Sachs.

This is just one of the seminars and workshops open to the public over the course of the festival.

These will take place at the festival’s new base, the Elangeni Hotel, but screenings will take place at nine different venues, including Suncoast Casino, Musgrave Centre cinema, Gateway’s Nouveau cinema, Ekhaya Multi Arts Centre in KwaMashu and the Luthuli Museum in KwaDukuza.

Sea lovers can enjoy the screenings of the Wavescape Surf Film Festival at the Bay of Plenty lawns on North Beach.

Areas of interest this year include African cinema, British cinema and the WildTalk Wildlife Film Festival.

A programme of cinema focusing on architecture will also be screened, in a nod to Durban’s hosting the International Union of Architects Congress next month.

The festival will wrap up on June 27.