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INTERVIEW

No business like it

There's a lot more to the entertainment industry than lights, camera, and action. FM Campus asks **Colin Moss** what it takes to make it big on the silver screen

Colin Moss's arts degree holds him in good stead as he works his way behind the cameras, going from screen star to budding producer. Eugene Yiga chats to him about the industry's challenges and getting ahead in movies.

You graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the then University of Natal. What did you learn in your time there?

University was really the only option in Durban. If I'd lived in Johannesburg or Cape Town I might have considered a film school like AFDA. I did take part in every production available while I was at university and learnt a lot about the craft. A humanities degree gives you a very balanced, well-rounded education and I really enjoyed that. A film school diploma is probably more useful, but again, not essential. Experience is the only currency you need. Then again, experience is easier to acquire in the safe environment of a tertiary institution.

Not everyone in the industry stands in front of the cameras. What other roles are involved?

The ultimate "behind the scenes" career in this industry is producing. A producer has to be involved in every aspect of a production from start to finish.

What do you do on a typical work day?

There is no "typical" work day. If I'm shooting a movie it usually involves being on set before dawn and then putting in a full 12 hours. There's not much time for anything else. Between jobs, however, you get loads of time to yourself.

Is it hard to juggle all your responsibilities and maintain a balance between work and play?

It can be, but I don't sit around waiting for the phone to ring. I keep very busy with writing, production, comedy and other business (including [corporate learning company] The Poker Room and my own production company). Still, I always make time to head down to the beach for a surf when the waves are good.

What's going on in the industry right now?

The recession has hit the industry hard. In previous years I would go to six or seven castings a week. This year it's been one or two a month. Fortunately, I'm not completely reliant on the industry to pay my bills.

How do you fund your projects? What financial skills have you had to learn in your career?

The majority of my work is funded before it gets to me. I'm hired by a production company very far down the line. It's only as a producer that you have to raise capital. I'm learning this as I'm getting projects commissioned in my new production company.

You have a wide range of skills including tango dancing, advanced driving, rock climbing, and martial arts. What skills are necessary for a career in the entertainment industry?

First and foremost, the ability to act, but presenting, singing, dancing, comedy or whatever your strengths are will also come in handy. Other skills (such as stunts and fighting skills) will always be useful in an acting career.

Some say the entertainment industry can be quite brutal. What advice would you give anyone brave enough to tackle it?

Tenacity is more important than anything else. You've just got to keep at it, even if it means putting up with a few cattle call castings. You also wouldn't believe how important it is to be a nice guy who's easy to work with. Producers will use people they enjoy working with again and again.

Eugene Yiga