

Follow



Like

227k

Subscribe

Industry Tools

Newsletters

Daily PDF

Register

Log in

THE Hollywood REPORTER

South African Animation Studio Triggerfish Gets Funding, Plans Action-Comedy 'Seal Team' (Exclusive)

7:59 AM PST 11/15/2013 by Georg Szalai

27

21

0

0

0

Email (#)

Print (/print/656331)

Comments

(<http://i.mp>)



Triggerfish Animation

The "Pixar of South Africa," which has had success with "Zambezia" and "Khumba," will develop the first two films in a slate of five and targets releasing one movie a year starting in 2016.

South Africa's Triggerfish Animation Studios has secured development funding that it says will allow it

to develop the first two projects in a slate of five movies, company executives said.

OUR EDITOR RECOMMENDS

South Africa's Triggerfish Animation Developing 'Sea

Financial details weren't disclosed. The company also continues to explore additional financing options and the possible sale of a stake to a strategic partner.

Triggerfish also said it plans to release one movie a year starting in 2016.

The Cape Town-based company, which has been dubbed the "Pixar of South Africa," said in the first phase of development of its slate it would focus on previously announced sea monster adventure *Here Be Monsters* and a new project with the working title *Seal Team*.

Triggerfish's first two features, *Zambezia*, starring **Samuel L. Jackson** among other voice actors, and *Khumba*, starring the voices of **Liam Neeson**, **Laurence Fishburne** and **Steve Buscemi**, have performed well in South Africa and beyond.

Here Be Monsters was selected for the Creative Focus pitch at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival earlier this year. It is based on an original story from writer **Raffaella Delle Donne** who worked on both of Triggerfish's previous films. The movie will tell the story of a boy and a sea monster, marking the studio's first foray into animating human characters.

Seal Team is described as an action-comedy that pits a group of seals against the great white sharks of South Africa. The script is currently being written by **Brian and Jason Cleveland** of Cinema Management Group who handled world sales on Triggerfish's previous films.

"We had a good working relationship with the Cleavelands on *Zambezia* and were impressed by their passion for the medium and for great stories," said Triggerfish CEO and producer **Stuart Forrest**. "So it was great when they came with this concept that is so close to home for us."

"We have a number of exciting properties in the pipeline," said head of development **Anthony Silverston**. "But we're particularly excited by these two highly original and exciting high-concept stories. And although both stories have an ocean setting, they couldn't be more different!"

Asked about how much financing Triggerfish had secured, Forrest told *THR* it was enough to get the two scripts developed on the studio's budgets, which are much smaller than budgets for Hollywood animation fare.

"We are still looking for a strategic partner to take a stake in

(
h
t
t
p
:
/
/
w
w
w
.
h
o
l
l
y
w
o
o
d
r
e
p
o
r
t
e
r
.
c
o
m
/
n
e
w
s
/
s
o
u
t
h
-
a
f
r
i
c
a
s
-
t
r
i
g
g
e
r
f
i
s
h
-
a
n
i
m
a
t
i
o
n
-
d
e
v
e
l
o
p
m
e
n
t
)

Triggerfish and help to take us to the next level," he added without providing further details.

"We want to build the business and have a stronger platform for the next movie to launch it broader into the world and have even better success," Forrest had told *THR* earlier this year. He argued that the budgets for his firm are low enough that it can make five films for the price of one "and have five chances to find a franchise hit."

According to the CEO, *Zambezia* has grossed more than \$30 million to-date. "I believe it is the highest-grossing South African-owned film in around 30 years," he recently told *THR*.

Although Triggerfish's stories so far have been set in Africa, the company has said it has "a global vision to create animated films with universal messages for all ages."

The studio secured the new development funding from Business Partners' Venture Fund, a finance company that focuses on small to medium-sized companies.

"The funds will be used towards developing Triggerfish's slate of five animated feature films and to expand the studio's digital department building on existing properties and exploring new ideas with apps and games," the studio said.

Khumba, which has been at festivals and film markets all year, is currently in cinemas in South Africa. It has held the top spot for two weeks and will be rolling out throughout the rest of the world going into 2014.

E-mail: Georg.Szalai@THR.com (<mailto:Georg.Szalai@THR.com>)

Twitter: @georgszalai